

# Wild 120

29 YEARS OF WILDERNESS ADVENTURE HERITAGE

FEDERATION PEAK: THE FIRST  
ASCENT OF BLADE RIDGE  
WALKING QUEENSLAND'S  
SUNSHINE COAST  
PROFILE: BRIAN WALTERS  
TASMANIA'S DU CANE RANGE  
GORGE WALKING IN KALBARRI  
TREKKING POLE AND  
GAITER SURVEYS

## Shadows & Light

A walk in Fiordland

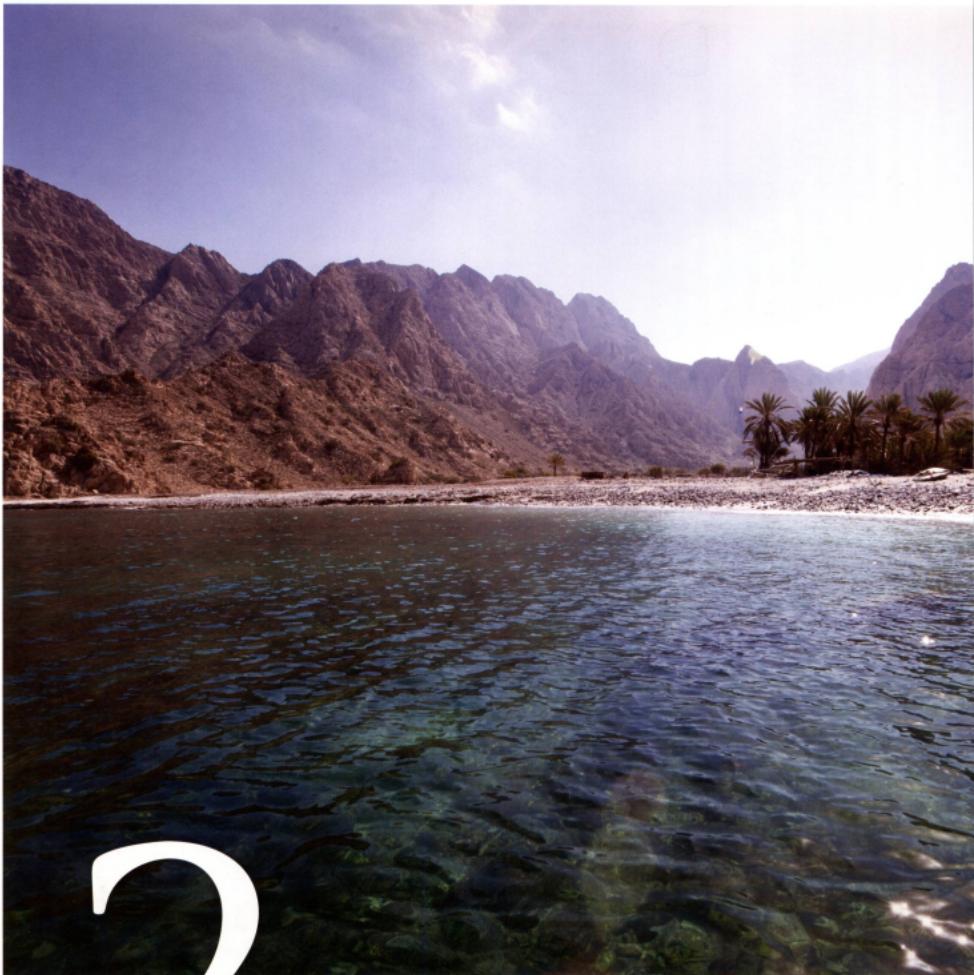


ISSN 1030-469X

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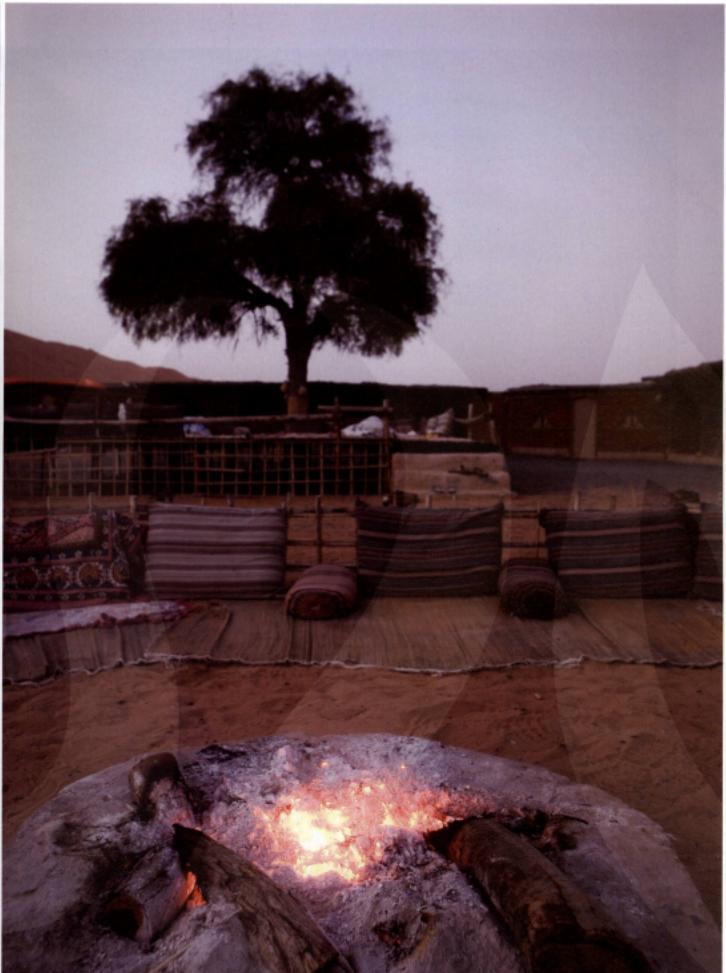


AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE



2

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# Wild

AUSTRALIA'S PIONEERING ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

Established 1981

November-December

2010, issue 120 \$8.95\*

\* Maximum Australian recommended retail price only

### WARNING

The activities covered in this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety, and equipment could result in serious injury or death.

*Cover Parish Robbins above Large Burn in Fiordland, New Zealand (read the full story on page 28), Ian Brown*

*Still life with tent; camp on Bécheraise Plateau during the 1968 ascent of Blade Ridge on Federation Peak (see our retro scoop on page 34). David Neilson*

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**In the damp, the roof of the tent sagged like a teenager's pants. Where my head touched the inner, moisture beaded through. We ate pasta and stag chilli and settled in for a long night, the rain drumming on the fly.**



## What doesn't kill you

I love this old photo that David Neilson sent through for his 'retro scoop' on climbing Federation Peak. For a start it captures the hypnotic effect of a campfire when you sit around one at night. But the main thing I love about it is what they are wearing. Back in 1968, Federation Peak was the arse end of nowhere, about as wet and wild as it comes in Australia – it took bushwalkers years to even get to the peak to climb it. Despite this, in the photo you can see how basic their equipment was: woolen jumpers, a jajara jacket and the crowning glory, Rod Harris' canvas Converse trainers.

I am wearing a pair of Converse trainers now. They are quite nice for sipping lattes and looking very North Fitzroy (stylish, for non-Melbournites unfamiliar with our sophisticated ways), but beyond that they offer as much support for walking as wet toilet paper. My feet get sore going shopping in these shoes (although I do sometimes find an hour's shopping more tiring than bushwalking for eight). As for scrambling through Southwest Tasmania over wet rocks, roots and mud with a heavy pack – my perfectly formed ankles shudder with horror.

When I see photos like this it makes me realise that we often get too obsessed with

gear. We say to ourselves that we can't do something until we have this or that or some other desirable bit of kit, but the truth is that often it is just our mind that is holding us back.

I have just spent three days in the Blue Mountains attempting to retrace the steps of Jamie Neale, the British backpacker who was lost for 12 days below Mt Solitary last year (the story of which will follow in a future issue). I was told by my walking companion, Julian Ledger – the Chief Executive Officer of the YHA in NSW and one of the people who spent days searching for Jamie – that I didn't need to bring a tent. So I was somewhat perturbed setting up camp on the first night when Julian pulled from his pack an antique, A-frame Wilderness Equipment tent, circa-1980, and just marginally younger than myself. As I helped Julian pitch the tent, I watched the once-waterproof lining flake off like a bad case of dandruff and thought about the pile of brand new, cutting-edge tents our tent surveyor had just dropped off at the office.

It was the next night that all my fears were realised. As we thrashed through scrub at the end of the day, contouring around to an obscure stream called Bumba Yaka Creek, the

rain started to come down. We slid down slippery slabs to the bottom of the gorge and found a spot to camp on a semblance of flat ground beside the creek. Opposite our chosen spot we discovered a small cave where the three of us could stand leaning against a slab just out of the pouring rain, and waited for it to stop.

My companions, the 'locals', confidently said that it would probably 'just be a shower'. I wasn't so sure. Forty minutes later the rain seemed to be pretty set in to me. We drank a cup of tea and contemplated setting up the antique in the rain.

After the tea and some internal praying for the 'shower' to stop (it didn't), we set up the old A-frame, pegging it out on the damp earth, rushing around in the slopping wet under our hoods. Then the two of us piled in, dragging off our wet gear, changing into thermals and slipping into our bags.

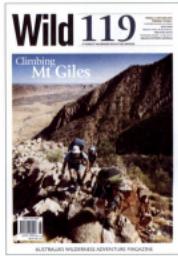
In the damp, the roof of the tent sagged like a teenager's pants. Where my head touched the inner, moisture beaded through. We ate pasta and stag chilli and settled in for a long night, the rain drumming on the fly.

And you know what? It wasn't too bad. I had to pull my six-foot-two frame up on to my mat to avoid getting the end of my sleeping bag soaked; a leech crawled in under the fly netting and attached itself to Julian's ear; it was damp and cramped, but we were warm. That old antique – much maligned in my mind – stood the test. The next morning we packed away our soaking kit and headed for civilisation and I thought of Jamie Neale – 12 days out in this wilderness with no food, alone, in the middle of winter and wearing just a hoody. It is amazing what you can do without.

Ross Taylor  
editorial@wild.com.au

**Left, Peter Heddles (on left), David Neilson and Rod Harris sitting around a campfire on Béchervaise Plateau during their 1968 trip to climb Blade Ridge on Federation Peak in Tasmania (read the full story on page 34).  
Jack Woods**





Issue 119, Sep-Oct 2010

## COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS: PROGRESSIVE?

Andrew Cox's report opining that the new NSW National Parks legislation for increasing commercial operations is 'regressive' (*Wild* no 119, *Info*) can't go unchallenged.

Commercial operators have for many years been an integral part of national parks and they do a lot more good than is given credit for. They provide employment and increase opportunities for people to access remote areas; people who otherwise would not have the skills or the courage to do so without guides. They are not environmental vandals.

Rather, they are conscious of preserving and managing the environment they operate in. They are highly experienced, qualified, safe and educated environmentalists – not cowboys as is implied by Cox. Most parks I have operated in have strict environmental management policies and commercial operators, in my experience, respect the rules.

There are many examples, both in Australia and overseas, where commercial guides and private lodge owners (eg Milford Track, Alpine Guides in Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park) happily coexist in pristine areas without destroying the environment. After all, what is the objection to commercial operators taking bushwalkers into wilderness areas? Are they sacred sites only to be enjoyed by the chosen few? Much of this green mantra smacks of elitism and anti-business rhetoric. Rather than being 'regressive', the new policy is a breath of fresh air.

Commercial operators have a rightful place in taking people who would otherwise not have the ability or opportunity to experience and value the special places in our national parks. The answer to preserving our parks is in regulating and monitoring commercial activity, not banning it.

**Zac Zaharias  
Campbell, ACT**

## SOLO WALKING

While the dangers associated with drinking your own urine are unclear ('Urophagia' page 39, *Wild* no 119), the dangers of walking alone are well known. Something as simple as a broken ankle, getting lost or running out of water can result in death. Two common features of the articles 'Solo Man' and 'Missing' are that in both articles apparently experienced bushwalkers put their lives at risk by walking alone in unfamiliar country.

As someone who also loves to explore remote and trackless wilderness, I can understand the challenges of trying to persuade someone to accompany you on a personal crusade to explore an unnamed mountain or creek. However, if I cannot find someone to do the walk with me, I simply do not go – unlike the people in your articles. These people may not value their own lives, but do they consider the hardship to loved ones and the risks to rescuers? Even Bear Grylls has a film crew with him.

**Chris Stevenson  
Beecroft, New South Wales**

## THE BEST SLEEPING MAT?

I've come to expect that your equipment reports are limited in scope, but I was surprised when the review on sleeping mats (*Wild* no 119) didn't mention mine.

The Pacific Outdoor Ether Thermo 6 is the best mat I've ever used by far. Yes, you have to blow it up; but it weighs 623 grams, folds down to the size of a milk carton, and at six centimetres thick it is comfortable – no more tossing and turning because of a sore 56-year-old hip. It is relatively warm and also reasonably cheap at around \$130.

**Keith Binnis  
Goulburn, New South Wales**

## WELLINGTON PARK

The title of your news item 'Tasmania's Wellington Park to be clearfelled' (*Wild* no 119, page 16) and the caption to the photograph accompanying the same article are both incorrect. No part of Wellington Park is scheduled for clearfelling. In fact the area in which harvest is planned is State Forest in which native forest harvest and reforestation is a permitted use, under the strict provisions of the Forest Practices Act.

The article implies that eagle nests in Wellington Park will be impacted by harvest. As mentioned, no harvest is planned within Wellington Park. Pre-harvest nest searches are a requirement under the Forest Practices Code for any harvest area containing potential eagle nesting habitat. The Forest Practices guidelines and state legislation ensure that

all eagle nests potentially affected by harvest are protected by buffer zones, and that access to critical areas close to nests is prohibited during the nesting season.

The article also implies that harvest will lead to increased erosion and sedimentation. The Forest Practices Authority (FPA) strictly applies guidelines and regulations to limit erosion and sedimentation in streams and these guidelines and regulations can be viewed in the Forest Practices Code and on the Forest Practices Authority website ([www.fpa.tas.gov.au](http://www.fpa.tas.gov.au)). Monitoring and supervision by foresters during operations and independent coupe audits conducted by the FPA show that stream guidelines and regulations are enforced and effective: the results of monitoring and assessment of Code standards are publicly available in the FPA annual reports dating back to 1988.

Accredited Forest Practices Officers are undertaking the detailed planning to protect environmental values in the proposed harvest areas, in consultation with local residents, and are cooperating closely with the local community and the scientific specialists of the FPA to achieve good outcomes. It is disappointing that your magazine has allowed publication of this anonymously authored and factually incorrect article without first checking its contents with those organisations responsible for professional land management in the area.

**Dr P.D. McIntosh  
Forest Practices Authority  
Hobart**

See correction below. **Editor**

**Readers' letters** are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to *Wild*, 11–15 Buckhurst St, South Melbourne, Vic 3205 or email [editor@wild.com.au](mailto:editor@wild.com.au)

## Corrections and Amplifications

There are a number of corrections for the last issue of *Wild*. In the Green Pages in the article on Wellington Park (page 16), we said in the heading that Wellington Park is soon to be clearfelled. The caption also says that the photo of the wedge-tailed eagle was taken in Wellington Park. Neither statement is correct, with the photo being taken in an adjoining area that is due to be clearfelled, as correctly mentioned in the body of the article. The error was made by *Wild*, not the author of the article. In our survey of down

sleeping bags (on page 69), we incorrectly listed the type of down in the Snowgum Couloir; it should have said goose down not duck down. On page 73, we listed the wrong price for the GSI Trowel; it retails for \$13.95.

# Wild

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

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**Founder** Chris Baxter OAM

**Publisher** Prime Creative Media  
ABN 51 127 239 212

**Printing** Brougham Press

**Distribution** Gordon & Gotch Australia Pty Ltd

**Subscription** rates are currently \$47.95 for one year (six issues), \$89 for two years, or \$125 for three years, to addresses in Australia. For overseas addresses, the rates are \$85, \$165, and \$235, respectively. When moving, advise us immediately of your new and old addresses to avoid lost or delayed copies.

**Advertising** rates are available on request. Copy deadline (advertising and editorial): 11 November, 14 January, 11 March, 14 May, 16 July, 16 September. See below for publication dates.

**Contributions** preferably well illustrated with images, are welcome. Contributors' Guidelines are available at [wild.com.au](http://wild.com.au). Written submissions should be supplied by email. Please ensure that submissions are accompanied by an envelope and sufficient postage. Names and addresses should be written on manuscripts and photos. While every care is taken, no responsibility is accepted for material submitted. Articles represent the views of the authors, and not necessarily those of the publisher.

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*Wild* is published bi-monthly at the end of the month before cover date (cover dates: January–February, March–April, May–June, July–August, September–October, November–December) by Prime Creative Media.

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*Wild* is printed on *Behavioral* Paper, which contains 30–55% recycled paper, from PEFC Certified mills, ECF - Elemental Chlorine Free, ISO 14001 Certified mill. The cover has a water-based varnish (not an environmentally detrimental UV or plastic finish).

## THE GREEN PAGES GETS ITS OWN EDITOR

We are very excited to introduce a special editor for the Green Pages, Sally Sherwen. Sally is a recent Master of Science (Zoology) graduate from the University of Melbourne with a keen interest in science and environmental journalism. We are sure Sally's knowledge and experience will improve the content of the Green Pages. If you have any stories you want to bring to Sally's attention, feel free to contact her on [greenpages@wild.com.au](mailto:greenpages@wild.com.au), otherwise, welcome Sally.



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# The return of Wild Shot



**Photographer Marcus Holloway writes:**  
Recently, while walking up Mt Etna in Italy, we narrowly avoided a volcanic eruption. We were sitting on the crater rim when we felt the tremors followed moments later by an incredible eruption just metres from where we sat. We immediately ran straight down the cone and this photo shows my girlfriend, Angela, running down to safety.

We are glad to see that Marcus stopped to let his girlfriend catch up, even if it was just so that he could take a photo. For capturing the moment he wins a superb camera bag from Kata, the Ultra-Light Bumblebee-222 UL, RRP \$450. If you would like to submit a photo to Wild Shot and be eligible for a prize, send your image to [editorial@wild.com.au](mailto:editorial@wild.com.au). We are looking for outdoor shots that tell a good story, be it humorous, inspiring, spectacular or evocative.



# Mountain Running Roundup

John Harding reports

IN ITS SIXTH ITERATION, THE CANBERRA Bush Capital Bush Marathon Festival on 31 July attracted over 500 entries. Peter Loveridge from Gunndah produced the day's highlight when he set a new marathon record of 2 hours, 46 minutes, 7 seconds, just one second faster than Alex Matthew's 2009 time. Canberra's James Savill was runner up in 3 hours, 25 minutes, 11 seconds. Sarah Carpenter from Berrima was the female champion in 3 hours, 26 minutes, 38 seconds with Susan Archer second in 3 hours, 43 minutes, 15 seconds.

Over a new, tougher course, Damian Smith from Nowra took out the 60-kilometre ultra in 5 hours, 37 seconds, beating former world rogaining champion David Baldwin, who made a big charge in the second 30 kilometres to take second in 5 hours, 4 minutes, 53 seconds. In the women's event three-time world rogaining champion Julie Quinn clocked in after 5 hours, 47 minutes, 16 seconds, despite running with a heavy backpack for extra training. Kelley Flood finished second, four minutes further back in the field.

Lennon Wicks won the 25-kilometres in 1 hour, 39 minutes, 50 seconds, four minutes ahead of Canberra orienteering representative Chris Hellwell. Jodie Barker was fastest female in 1 hour, 57 minutes, two minutes ahead of Michelle Elmitt.

Defending champion, local Laurie Cullen – who trains regularly on the Mt Ainslie trails – led from start to finish to win the 16-kilometre in 1 hour, 1 minute, 26 seconds, 11 seconds ahead of former Australian mountain running champion Anthony Scott. Julia Reed was fastest female in 1 hour, 12 minutes, 58 seconds, four minutes ahead of Sarah Richardson.

Julian Suitor set a new men's ten-kilometre race record of 38 minutes, 47 seconds and Elizabeth Humphries was fastest female in 43 minutes, 7 seconds. Conor Sproule won the five-kilometre in 18 minutes 9 seconds, while Rebekah Sawkins was the fastest female with 21 minutes, 15 seconds.

**Right,** winner of the tongue-twisting Bush Capital Bush Marathon, Peter Loveridge. John Harding



## Homegrown adventure film festival launches for 2011

AUSTRALIAN AUTEURS OF ADVENTURE, START YOUR cameras...the Cairns Adventure Film Festival, in media partnership with Wild's sister publication *Outer Edge*, has called for entries to its revamped 2011 competition. The brief is simple and as open-ended as the nature of adventure itself – conceive, produce, shoot and edit a film showcasing how you get your adventure fix. There are a host of categories including:

**Short Adventures in Nature** – Narrative-style short films (under ten minutes) featuring adventures, journeys and explorations in nature, be they sport-based, expeditions or travel docos. Green-powered films are encouraged and the focus is on the adventurer's interaction with the wilderness and the wonders it contains.

**People's Choice Mad Minutes** – Under two minutes in length, featuring fast-paced, adrenaline action and set to pumping music. These will be posted on YouTube in the month prior to the event and judged by the

voting viewers. Open to any nationality of filmmaker.

**Caffeinated Adventures** – Under six minutes in length, featuring adrenaline-style adventure activities of any sort. Music videos, animation or narratives allowed. There will be an award for the best entry from a filmmaker under 18 years of age.

**Adventure Features** – Quality films, under 90 minutes in length, showcasing expeditions, achievements and personal journeys by those pushing the limits in our natural world. Surf, snow, expedition, and all nature-based and urban adventures are welcome as long as they tell a story and show respect for nature.

The Cairns Adventure Film Festival is open to filmmakers of all experience levels and ages. CAFF takes a broad definition of adventure and wishes to be an inclusive competition that showcases the action and enthusiasm of the adventures as well as the filmmaker's talent.

Films (other than entries for the Mad Minute) must be made in Australia, New Zealand, East/South East Asia or by an Aussie, Kiwi or East/South East Asian. All time limits include opening titles and credits and it is the filmmaker's responsibility to ensure they use copyright-free or obtain the correct written permissions for any music featured.

Mark 28 May 2011 in your calendars as the day of the awards ceremony and check the website and future editions of *Wild* and *Outer Edge* for entry closing dates.

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## National Grading System for Australia's Walking Tracks

Across Australia bushwalkers face inconsistent track descriptions and grading systems that vary across state boundaries. In response, the Federal Government is creating a nation-wide grading system for walking tracks. With funding from the Victorian Government's Go For Your Life initiative, the Department for Sustainability and Environment is working with other states and territories to develop an Australian Walking Track Grading System. Walks will be graded on a difficulty scale of one to five and accompanied by a 'plain English' description. Ultimately, it's hoped the new grading system will encourage new bushwalkers and help experienced walkers choose tracks within their ability. The system's implementation will most likely be gradual.

See [dse.vic.gov.au](http://dse.vic.gov.au) for more.



## Mountain Biking Making Tracks

As one of the fastest growing outdoor pursuits, mountain biking is making its mark in our parks – literally. Symptomatic of the sport's growing popularity is the number of unauthorised tracks being created, as well as the amount of illegal mountain biking on walking tracks. While the sport celebrates the natural environment, it can be detrimental to fragile ecosystems and conflict with other park users. The NSW Government has begun a discussion paper that proposes a new approach, allowing controlled mountain biking in some parks. Have your say at [mountainbiking.discussions.nsw.gov.au](http://mountainbiking.discussions.nsw.gov.au)

## Offenders to get burnt: on-the-spot fines for unsafe campfires

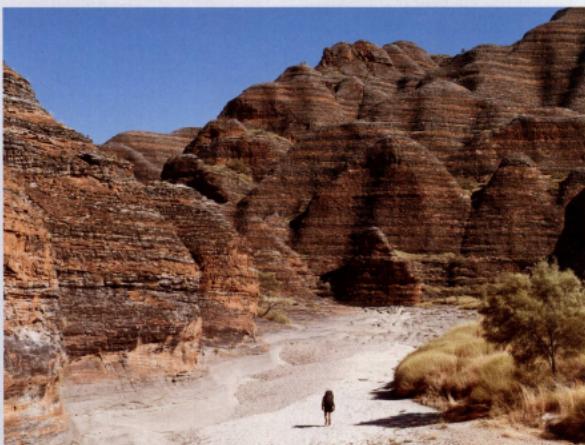
You will no longer have to be prosecuted in court for having an oversized or unattended fire in Victoria's parks, forests and reserves – now you can be fined \$360 on the spot. In a bid to diminish the risks associated with campfires, while still continuing to allow them, new liability offences have been added to the Forests Act 1958. For details on what defines 'oversized' and what is considered 'unattended', see [dse.vic.gov.au](http://dse.vic.gov.au).

## Broome's Global Agreement

What's believed to be the biggest native title agreement in Australia – a Global Agreement between Yawuru people, the Shire of Broome and the State of Western Australia – was officially celebrated at a ceremony in Broome on 24 August. The agreement recognises the Yawuru people as traditional owners of the area around Broome, and \$12 million will be put into the joint management of the surrounding conservation areas, allowing traditional owners to make decisions on how their own country is managed.

## Safari Camp in the Bungle Bungles

The Bungles – home to some of Australia's most unusual landforms – may be up for a tourism boost. The WA government has announced the creation of a new commercial safari camp, adding to the few already in existence. The State Government is teaming up with Intrepid Connections for a public-private project that will cater for up to 20 visitors in a low-impact, sustainable, nature-based operation. Its impact on the region's tourism and this significant landmark in the Kimberley's Purnululu National Park will be interesting to follow. [dec.wa.gov.au](http://dec.wa.gov.au)



**Right,** the Bungle Bungles will soon be home to a new commercial safari camp. Grant Dixon. **Top,** signs like this one might soon feature the new nationalised standard grading system for walks. Ross Taylor

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**TATONKA**  
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# Tawny Dragon *Ctenophorus decresii*



Difting for eons, first as part of the ancient supercontinent Gondwana and then breaking out on its own, Australia has been an evolutionary nursery for some amazing animals. As the continent edged closer to Asia, its fauna was enriched with new arrivals from the north. As a result, Australasia is rich in endemic wildlife. Tourist brochures expound the virtues of our iconic marsupials and monotremes, but a lesser-known and ecologically vital component of Australia's native fauna are reptiles, and the most commonly observed reptiles are lizards. Australia has five lizard families, one of which is agamidae, a rather uninspiring title when compared to the family's common name – dragons.

Dragons are perhaps the most iconic of Australian lizards. The impressive frill-necked lizard appeared on the now defunct two cent coin; the wicked-looking thorny devil (whose scientific name, *Moloch horridus*, literally translates to 'bristly devil') is a familiar sight on the sandy tracks of the nation's interior; and bearded dragons are becoming common family pets. On the coastal side of the Great Dividing Range, most watercourses are home to large, semi-aquatic water dragons that announce their presence by flinging themselves into the water at the approach of people. And in arid South Australia one little dragon ekes out a living while burrowing under the salt crusts of Lake Eyre.

Dragons can be found in almost all Australian habitats, and while arid regions contain the most species, one little dragon occurs all the way up into the snow country of southeastern Australia and island-hopped its way to Tasmania. The basic biology of dragons has been well known for a long time: all Australian species lay eggs (this contrasts with some skinks and snakes that give birth to fully-formed 'live' young), and they are sun-loving insect-eaters, although the larger species will also eat fruits and flowers. Many rely on camouflage to avoid unwanted attention from predators. Others have formidable threat displays if a potential predator gets too close (the display of the frill-necked lizard is one of the most famous and recognisable anti-predator displays on the planet). And like the frill-necked lizard, numerous dragon species will take to their hind limbs when attempting to out-sprint a predator.

In recent decades there have been some remarkable discoveries about these prickly-looking lizards. Some species have complex social repertoires, and communication between the sexes or rivals can include arm-waving, head-bobbing and colour displays. Male water dragons jealously guard a harem of females occupying a discreet stretch of stream. Clutches of eggs from some species will produce offspring of a single sex at a certain temperature, and the other sex at different temperatures (a phenomenon known as 'temperature-dependent sex determination'). And the thorny devil can draw groundwater or dew into its mouth using capillary action, with the water travelling along grooves on the lizard's body between its formidable spines.

The lizard above is a tawny dragon (*Ctenophorus decresii*). Like many dragon species, tawny dragons are sexually dichromatic (a fancy term that means that one sex, usually males, are more brightly coloured than the other). They occur on rocky outcrops in eastern South Australia and Mutawintji National Park in western New South Wales. Adults tend to stick to the rocks, but juveniles will forage on surrounding soils. Males are territorial and will defend their territories with displays of head-bobbing and tail-coiling, a behaviour shared with dragons from the deserts of Central Asia.

Nick Cleemann

Photographer Glenn Tempest writes: 'I took this image in the Flinders Ranges a few years back. Karen [Tempest] and I were traversing the tops of Wilpena Pound trying to link some of the higher peaks. On our way back down St Marys Peak we discovered this little guy in the middle of the track. He was catching the last rays of the setting sun and wouldn't move. We were hemmed in by spinifex so we ended up stepping over him and he didn't bat an eyelid...literally.'

To submit a photo for All Things Great and Small contact editorial@wild.com.au. We will accept photos of plants or animals and pay at our standard rate. Published photos will be accompanied by some history that we will source.



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# Brown Mountain Win

JILL REDWOOD REPORTS: In early August, Environment East Gippsland (EEG) won its landmark legal case against the Victorian Government logging monopoly VicForests in the Supreme Court. This momentous legal case could set a precedent for the way Victoria's remaining forests are logged – or hopefully, not logged.

Environment East Gippsland sued VicForests in 2009 after plans were revealed showing that the old-growth habitat of endangered wildlife would be clearfelled and burnt in the last unprotected stands at Brown Mountain. This forest adjoins the Errinundra Plateau in East Gippsland.

EEG is a small volunteer environment group that took a huge legal and financial gamble – and won. The four-week case was heard in March 2010. EEG relied on state laws, plans and prescriptions that are meant to protect endangered species. These laws have been in place for over 20 years and could have been breached daily while thousands of hectares of forests were logged over that period.

The long-footed potoroo, endangered forest owls, rare frogs, greater gliders and the spot-tailed quoll all featured in this case. Although there are laws to protect them and their habitat, reportedly the Government and VicForests did not survey for them before logging commenced.

EEG invested in movement-sensing



*Light streaming through the trees at Brown Mountain; now safe from logging thanks to Environment East Gippsland and its supporters. Judith Deland*

digital cameras and volunteers carried out surveys. They managed to capture the rare potoroo on film. EEG also contracted zoologist Dr Rohan Bilney to carry out spotlighting surveys. He found very high densities of gliders and possums as well as endangered owls – evidence of the richness and importance of these old-growth forests for animals dependent on tree hollows.

Such high-population densities should also have received 100 hectares of protected forest. But still the Government's environment department and VicForests refused to protect these species under the Government's own laws.

The Brumby Government assumed no environment group had the funds to launch a Supreme Court action against its logging arm. EEG didn't, but had enough pluck to kick-start the case. Once started, donations flowed in from across the country.

EEG hopes to have its costs recovered from VicForests, which could go towards future legal cases. The judgment was a landmark win in the history of Victorian forest campaigning. The outcome could have enormous implications for all forests, but there is some concern the government will find it difficult to abide by this ruling if applied to all forests.

## Mixed advice from the Bushfire Royal Commission

PHIL INGAMMELLS REPORTS: Victoria's Bushfire Royal Commission report was the most thorough investigation of natural and managed fire ever undertaken in Australia. Few people would doubt the integrity of the inquiry, or the lasting impact it's likely to have. But for the vexed issue of fuel reduction burning, its final recommendations were a mixed lot.

The Commission was very clear that the bush isn't just fuel – it is also where our native plants and animals exist. In fact, the Commission insisted that monitoring and database management recording native flora and fauna had to be radically improved, and that there should be annual reporting to the public on the effectiveness of planned burning programs for fuel reduction, and also for the impacts on biodiversity.

However, the Commission fell for the old solution of a simplistic large statewide target for fuel reduction burns, even though its own expert panel didn't recommend it. That panel, made up of seven experienced fire ecologists and fire behaviour specialists, could only confidently recommend a five per cent annual target for the foothill forests, largely the stringybark woodlands of lower elevations. Even their expert flown in from the US made it clear that a big annual target just encourages 'gathering the low-hanging fruit' – burning larger remote areas rather than the smaller and expensive resource heavy burns close to townships.

There are now very few long-unburnt areas left in Victoria's Mallee and Wimmera parks, where birds like the Mallee fowl and Mallee emu wren depend on long-unburnt



*Wilsons Promontory after the 2009 fires; remnant unburnt areas are important for wildlife recolonisation after fire. Ingamells*

country. And one of the few areas relatively unburnt in Wilsons Promontory National Park, in the remote far southwest corner, is now marked to be burnt over the next couple of years.

What we need is a series of strategic regional and local targets across the state that account for local safety issues, and also look after our natural heritage.

More information at [fire.vmpa.org.au](http://fire.vmpa.org.au)

# James Price Point

AFTER FAILING TO negotiate a consent agreement with traditional land owners in the Kimberley, the West Australian Government recently began proceedings to compulsorily acquire land to build a controversial \$30 billion gas processing plant at James Price Point, north of Broome.

At the end of September, Broome Shire approved Woodside's application to clear vegetation and drill to see if there is enough reliable water to supply the planned hub.

Over 100 anti-gas campaigners attended a council meeting about the decision, including musician John Butler, and as we go to print, Greens leader Bob Brown is visiting the area to meet the Kimberley Land Council and conservation groups in Broome. The Greens are opposed to the



Bob Brown. Peter Campbell

Premier's decision to compulsorily acquire the land and have said they will continue to raise the issue in parliament.

WA Premier, Colin Barnett says the planned gas plant will provide \$1.5 billion in benefits to the traditional owners. However, the environmental cost on one of the world's last remaining pristine areas is likely to be significant according to many

environmental groups. James Price Point is crucial habitat for a number of species including green sea turtles and humpback whales that annually migrate to the area for calving. Boat traffic is likely to have a negative impact on the populations. Tourism is also likely to suffer as the wilderness area will be devalued by industrial development.

## Postcard from the edge

GRAHAM CASTLES REPORTS on a critical Conservation Volunteers Australia program to save the eastern barred bandicoot from extinction.

Hamilton Community Parklands in western Victoria is the focus of an intense conservation program. Here, eastern barred bandicoots forage for bugs and grubs in a small reserve of around 500 hectares. Classified as Critically Endangered in Victoria, the main cause for their decline has been the conversion of the plains west of Melbourne for agriculture. Being no bigger than a rabbit also makes these small marsupials easy prey for cats and foxes. Right now, an electrified predator-proof fence is the single thing keeping this population alive.

The only hope is to reintroduce this species to areas where they are extinct. I was lucky enough to be among the first group from Conservation Volunteers Australia to help the DSE monitoring program in August this year. The aim is to assess whether this population is strong enough to relocate some individuals to new sites, such as the one planned for a reserve near Melbourne's Tullamarine airport. Their success is vital to the recovery of the species, as captive breeding programs alone

may not provide enough genetic diversity to prevent problems associated with inbreeding.

Eastern barred bandicoots are nocturnal, so traps are set late in the day, then checked early the following morning. About the size of a cat box, traps have a tasty treat at one end, triggering a door to close behind whatever small mammal has entered to nibble on it. Trapped bandicoots are carefully weighed and their general health assessed before being released.

Winter is breeding season and of the 50 plus bandicoots trapped, several had young in the pouch. Most were small and naked, like moist, pink jelly beans, but a few had fur developing and were getting ready to leave mum's pouch to begin life's adventure. Volunteers were filled with hope by the sight of those small animals. We know that we have been part of something significant and hopefully long lasting. With a bit of luck, this is one species future generations may look back on as a conservation success story in a nation where small mammals were lost faster than anywhere else.

See [www.conservationvolunteers.com.au/volunteer/Eastern-Barred-Bandicoot-Monitoring.htm](http://www.conservationvolunteers.com.au/volunteer/Eastern-Barred-Bandicoot-Monitoring.htm) for more.

## WOODCHIPS

### Walks Against Warming

At the annual Walks Against Warming march in capital cities and regional centres across the country, the Wilderness Society was thrilled to be joined by many supporters, unified in their belief in the environment's vital role in combating climate change.

Placards spread the messages: 'Say no to burning our native forests for electricity', 'Fighting global warming starts with saving forests', and 'Walk with the people, not the big polluters'.

In Tasmania, over a thousand people took to the streets, calling for urgent action on climate change, including protecting Tasmania's native forests. In Sydney the marchers were kept dancing by the Wilderness Society Samba Band, who were such a hit they were invited up on stage to perform for the crowds. In Brisbane, Hayley the Palm Cockatoo kept her feet on the ground, walking along with our wild supporters.

As part of the walks, speakers took to the stages with messages on why a healthy environment is important in the solution to climate change.

### Gunns out of Native Forests

In a remarkable turnaround, logging and woodchip giant Gunns will move out of all native forests in Tasmania and now only use plantation wood. In early September, Gunns' CEO Greg L'Estrange said 'the debate over logging native forests had been lost' and that the 'conflict must end'.

European markets are now demanding eco-certified paper and timber products and this has been a key influence in the decision. After years of staunch resistance to public opinion, fierce clashes with Tasmanian communities and legal battles with environment groups, Gunns' shift to more ethical and acceptable operations is a welcome move. Many are hoping this will be followed by the rest of Australia's logging and woodchipping industry.

# The 2010 Wild Environmentalist of the Year: a call for nominations

SINCE 1995, THE WILD Environmentalist of the Year award has recognised the efforts of some of Australia's hardest working and most effective environmental campaigners. This year we have decided to change the way we run the awards. We want you, our readers, to get involved with the process by nominating individuals who you think are worthy of being considered for 2010's Wild Environmentalist of the Year.

In opening up the nomination process we hope that, not only will you be able to bring to our attention people who may have previously flown under our radar, but that we can also engage more people in a celebration of those who work tirelessly for our natural environment.

In thinking about what qualifies someone for Wild Environmentalist of the Year, we have worked out a few key criteria for nominees:

1. They must be working in the field of wilderness conservation.

2. They should be contributing full time or close to full time.
3. They should be deserving of recognition for a major conservation achievement.

Very simply, the idea of the Wild Environmentalist of the Year is to recognise people who have contributed to the protection of the natural environment over many years, often with too little recognition and with a significant salary sacrifice. It also celebrates wins for the environment from time to time. For example, when grazing was removed from the high country, we honoured Phil Ingamells from the Victorian National Parks Association.

## WHAT WE NEED YOU TO DO

Having read the above criteria, if you know of someone who fits this description we ask you to email us at Wild on editorial@wild.com.au, along with a brief description of their achievements. You are welcome to

nominate more than one person. Nominees must be Australian, although their work can be international.

## CHOOSING THE WILD ENVIRONMENTALIST OF THE YEAR

Once we have a pool of nominees (with the cut-off date being the end of this year), a panel of consisting of Brian Walters (one of Wild's co-founders and a prominent environmental and human rights campaigner – see the article on page 24 for more on Brian), the current editor of Wild (Ross Taylor) and the previous year's winner – in this case, Cam Walker, a legendary environmental campaigner from Friends of the Earth – will choose a winner from the pool of nominations.

So, if you know of someone who you think is deserving of recognition (and the \$1000 prize), please contact us at editorial@wild.com.au.

# Protect Our Winters arrives in Australia

**CAM WALKER REPORTS:** Most Wild readers will be keenly aware of the likely coming impacts of climate change on the areas that we know and love. A recent report from climate scientists in Tasmania highlights, yet again, that our alpine areas will be greatly affected by global warming.

The report *Vulnerability of Tasmania's Natural Environment to Climate Change* says that increased shrub and tree invasion could lead to significantly transformed alpine ecosystems. In addition, the alpine areas could warm faster and be more affected by increased fire risk than surrounding low land regions.

Many readers who understand the need to rein in greenhouse emissions are already active in or supportive of a range of environmental groups.

So why does Australia need a new group focused on climate change?

As we know, thousands of Australians visit our Alps in winter – to ski or board either in resorts or out in the backcountry. Add to this the snowshoers, the summer walkers, the snowmobilers who want to give their kids the snow experience and you have hundreds of thousands of people.

Yet this broad and diverse group does not yet have a focus for action on this most pressing of issues that will impact directly on the mountains we all love.

This is where Protect Our Winters (POW) comes in. POW is a global environmental foundation that was established in 2007 by legendary professional snowboarder Jeremy Jones. POW seeks to reverse the global warming crisis by mobilising the global winter sports community.

Although it is strongest in North America, it is now broadening its reach into the Southern Hemisphere by opening local chapters in Australia, Argentina and Chile.

When POW was established, Jones said: 'the winter sports community can have a direct influence on minimizing the damage that has been done and ensure that winters are here for generations behind us.'

If we are to rise to the challenge posed by climate change we can't just have small-scale personal change. We must also tackle



Protect Our Winters wants to ensure that snowy vistas like this continue to exist in the future. Photo POW

the bigger issues – like where our energy comes from and how our governments act on climate change, and the type of economy we have.

We will need many types of groups and movements to achieve this. POW is simply one more piece in the big picture response we will need and seeks to directly engage with the part of the community who love the mountains and winter snow sports.

Visit [protectourwinters.org](http://protectourwinters.org) for more details.

# Leave no trace...



Leave No Trace (LNT) Australia is a national non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting and inspiring responsible outdoor travel and recreation through education, research and strategic partnerships.

At the heart of their philosophy lies the **"7 Principles of Leave No Trace"**: Plan ahead and prepare • Travel and camp on durable surfaces • Dispose of waste properly • Leave what you find • Minimise campfire impacts • Be considerate of your hosts and other visitors • Respect wildlife

As a founding member of LNT Australia, Sea to Summit has designed a range of innovative products to support the "7 Principles" of outdoor ethics.

## Kitchen Sink

Minimise wastewater in and around your campsite by using a 5, 10 or 20 litre Kitchen Sink to carry and store water for cooking, washing dishes, and washing yourself. A stainless steel stiffening ring in the top prevents the sink from collapsing when full and functions as well in the outback as it does in the campground.



## Folding Bucket

The Folding Bucket is a freestanding, lightweight and compact solution for carrying and storing water in the outdoors. Welded handle strap makes toting water from its source a snap. Additional grab handle, cylinder shape, measurement increments, and food grade coating make it an ideal use for your water purification system.



## Wilderness Wash

Our biodegradable Wilderness Wash is a super concentrated formula safe for personal use, pots, pans, clothes and outdoor gear. Leave No Trace Australia recommends washing dishes at least 100m from waterways to help maintain healthy aquatic ecosystems.



## Pocket Trowel (reinforced)

Encourage decomposition and avoid turning your favourite outdoor spot into a public dump with this collapsible, hollow-handled camp trowel. Made with glass reinforced Nylon 66 and widened spade, this trowel is strong yet lightweight.



## Trash Sack

Pack it in, pack it out. Designed with a unique roll top closure to prevent leaking, use it as a soft garbage bin in the field or in your car. Fitted with Hypalon® clip-in loops for easy hanging.



## Pack Tap

Pack your water in or use as part of water purification system once you've arrived at camp using a Sea to Summit Pack Tap. Nozzle in corner allows for steady flow of liquid and tough 210 denier nylon fabric and Hypalon lash tabs at corners make the Pack Tap a durable option for carrying and storing water.



## Outhouse (made with Ultra-Sil™)

This waterproof toilet paper dispenser (now made from super light UltraSil™) ensures that you have a dry roll handy for the duration of your trip. Nylon cord with clip lock strap allows you to hang it around your neck or tree.



## Pocket Shower

Keep yourself as clean as your camp with a Sea to Summit Pocket Shower. Fill the 10 litre dry bag, roll it to close at the top and hang it from two tough Deltin D rings with the 20 feet of lightweight cord provided. The black fabric soaks up sun during the day at base camp for a warm shower or fill it at the end of the day for a cool rinse.



[seatosummit.com.au](http://seatosummit.com.au)



# Rock Legend

**Quentin Chester reflects on the legacy of Col Reece, a renowned climber and outdoorsman**



**T**he news item was brief: 'A rock climber has fallen to his death at Robin Falls near the Adelaide River township in the Northern Territory.' Among scant details in the online report the person was identified as a '58-year-old man'. Given the Top End probably didn't have too many climbers of that age, this fact alone was enough to pack a jolt. A bit more searching confirmed that the bloke in question was indeed somebody I knew. Not just that, but one of the most prolific and protean characters to ever stalk the vertical.

By coincidence, just a few days before I'd been sorting through some gear in the shed. Among the rucksacks crammed with old tents and camping stuff there was a small pack of climbing gear. It was a bag I hadn't opened for years. Tipped on to the floor, this once-prized collection of paraphernalia formed a motley heap of faded slings and clanky cams. It looked like an abandoned nest. Ah yes, where once dreams were hatched, now nostalgia dreams were hatched, now nostalgia dreams were hatched.

Among the items was a battered karabiner, a small Bonatti 'D' with the stamped letters 'c reece' still decipherable among the pitting and paint flakes on its long axis. This was the last remaining artefact from a bundle of secondhand gear I bought in the mid-1970s. It had included several items that were obsolete even back then: a couple of symmetrical Chouinard hexentrics, several mismatched karabiners and odd-looking nuts on wire made by John Ewbank. At the time, however, these felt like sacred objects: my first rack of gear.

Karabiners have always been among the more satisfying bits of a climber's armoury. Elegantly simple, they sit neatly in the palm. Indeed climbers tend to toy with them in the same way some people play with worry beads. Hardly surprising I guess, given their 'links' to those wobbly, terror-struck moments when the lead rope is finally hauled to a much-needed piece of protection. The sound as you clip the rope and the gate of the karabiner clicks shut can be reassuring beyond belief.

So it was for me with that little Bonatti 'D'. As a beginner, its talismanic power was boosted even more by the knowledge it had seen action in the hands of the irreplaceable C Reece. Col was so many things: trailblazer, wild-eyed enthusiast, generous mentor, tight-lipped loner, chatty friend, compulsive explorer. Often he was many simmering things all at once. And now, suddenly and sadly, he had come unstuck on a crag in the Territory. The mercurial Col was gone.

Very few outdoor people have occupied such an influential place in their chosen orbit. For nearly 40 years, firstly in South

Australia (SA) and more recently in the Northern Territory (NT), Col was the arch-activist, the bloke who was always on the go, fossicking for new climbs. Through the decades he figured in the history of almost every known cliff in SA. Some might have climbed harder and more daintily but none surpassed his boldness or vision for a line. He has left an astounding inventory of inspiring routes, most notably on Moonarie's outlandish walls and arêtes in the Flinders Ranges heartland.

However, Col's legacy goes way beyond a tally of conquests. For a 'hard man' he could be surprisingly humble and accessible. Over the years, scores of beginners – including me – were introduced to the climbing arts under his patient tutelage. Yet, while people from all backgrounds – and a few regular partners – shared a rope with him, Colin was never enmeshed in a close group. Some part of him always seemed to remain distant and solitary. Above all else he loved to climb and if no one was on the spot to share in his latest project he'd go it alone.

As a result Colin soon gathered a reputation for daring solos. In Morialta Gorge just out of Adelaide he scampered up a bulging grade-19 wall to create Triad, his only protection an inflated Li-Lo at the base of the cliff. On one of his solitary weekends at Moonarie he knotted two ropes together and with the back-up of a Jumar ascender, top-roped all 115 metres of Machiavelli (20). On the same cliff, a few years earlier, he contemplated a significant ground fall when aiding his way along up the ultra-thin Rip Off (24).

Year by year these exploits merged with many other hair-raising tales of wild motorbike rides and all-night drives to Mt Buffalo in his old VW, or Moonarie in his trusty Datsun 120Y. There were other more roguish stories too, including the night he busted into the Yosemite Valley's Mountain Shop because the tent in the window display looked like an inviting spot to spend the evening. He was the sort of person who attracted rumours and speculation, partly because much of it was true, but also because he was the legend a lot of us seemed to need.

I was a callow uni student when I first met Colin in the mid-1970s. Though not especially tall, his strong upper body gave him a muscular physical presence. He often stood with his shoulders dipping in, poised in a slight hunch like a big cat. In those days he had frizzy helmet of blond hair, but the gaze of his piercing blue eyes was his most striking feature. In serious mode, his stare was brilliantly intense.

While a few stories of Colin's darker moods did the rounds, my personal memory

**There were other more roguish stories too, including the night he busted into the Yosemite Valley's Mountain Shop because the tent in the window display looked like an inviting spot to spend the evening. He was the sort of person who attracted rumours and speculation, partly because much of it was true, but also because he was the legend a lot of us seemed to need.**

**Right,** 'The gaze of his piercing blue eyes was his most striking feature'; Col on Ozymandias Direct at Mt Buffalo in 1983.

Col Reece. **Bottom,** Col climbing the Moonarie classic, Dryland (22). Mark Barnett

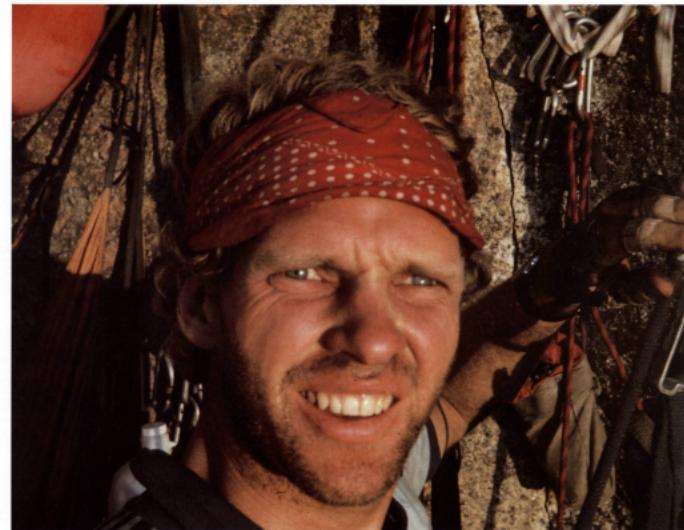
of him from that time was of an incredibly genial character with a quick laugh. He had a fine sense of the absurd and an ear for an outrageous pun. His climb names included the likes of *Gorilla My Dreams* (19) and *Cardiac Arête* (20). Being on rock seemed to liberate something from within and joining him on belay you were usually greeted by quips and a megawatt grin. Then, in the post-climb euphoria, Colin would often sprint off the cliff and boulder-hop down descent gullies. He loved to run.

When we climbed together I was astonished at the man's strength. He worked his hands and feet with the holds so methodically it seemed like slow motion. His climbs, too, were a deliberate exercise. So, for example, freeing the Moonarie classic *Orion* (21), was the culmination of many days of preparation, including building a model of the crux moves to practise on at home. It seemed as if he held in his head a masterplan for every cliff.

Moonarie was Col's kingdom. He knew every facet of the place. There was something about its frontier freedom and the rock architecture that suited him to a tee. With routes like *Hangover Layback* (15), *Sienna* (22), *Pine Crack* (19), *Rush* (17) and *Jumbo's Last Chance* (16), he pushed climbing out of the shadowy corners and into sunny space. Jump on a Col route and you know you are in for a wild ride – typically a bold, undergraded fling on edges and exposed scoops.

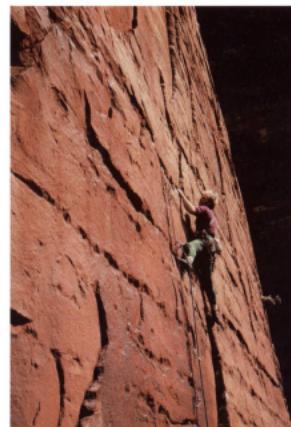
Those of us who aspired to a bit of new-climb discovery knew there was every chance that fearless Col had been there before and, if not, he could do it better than us anyway. That much was clear on a sunny June morning in 1977 when John Marshall and I started up a new route that became the climb *Vulcan* (22). Perhaps it was a line Colin had his eye on, or maybe being so visible from Moonarie's Top Camp it just got his competitive juices flowing. Whatever the reason, by the time we'd finished thrashing up the first pitch – with some aid moves – Col was hot on our heels, freeing the start in the process. So it was that our two parties paralleled their way to the top of the cliff in a spirit of good-natured and futile rivalry.

A few years later a few of us thought we'd found a new little crag all of our own just below the Great Wall. Over a warm Easter weekend we ticked off a few lines. Some months later it emerged that Colin had been there and done that a year earlier. We should have known. Among other things the man was an avid recorder, the kind of climber who gathers maps, photos and diagrams. He applied a quirky, encyclopaedic intelligence to editing the local climbing club magazine and the personal hand-written guidebooks he maintained for many years. I can't remember why, but he once also presented



me with a glorious poster-sized pencil illustration he had painstakingly drawn of Moonarie's main walls. It was a thing of beauty, an act of homage to a place he knew better than anyone.

Col's generosity was a genuine thing. With friends and strangers he was usually charming to the point of being chivalrous – a rare thing in the misfits milieu of climbing. On odd occasions, however, he did seem to be in a private funk. Once he turned up at camp and spent the next few nights sleeping in the dust by the fire – his only provisions a dozen eggs and a dozen long-necked beers. On another morning at Moonarie he renounced going to the cliff



and instead took off on an epic run: a full circuit of Wilpena Pound. We grew accustomed to these intermittent lapses; that's just the way he was.

Moving interstate, I lost touch with Col. But the stories of epic ascents and strange goings on kept coming. The fact that he was rumoured to be living semi-permanently in an elaborate bivvy cave at Rawsley Bluff, next door to Moonarie, seemed entirely plausible. More baffling was the chance discovery of his discarded slide collection by some young climbers at a public rubbish dump south of Adelaide. The images formed a priceless record of SA climbing. Thankfully they were saved and few weeks later a group of us foyges got together for a slide show. It was a night of unapologetic nostalgia, and an accidental celebration of Col. Never was somebody more present by their absence.

By this time Col had moved to the Northern Territory and a new life in Darwin. We heard he was deep into long-distance running and back into climbing too. The Top End seemed like a good fit. A frontier with lots of new rock, a bit like Moonarie 40 years ago. Year by year the reports filtered back and whenever climbers gathered in Adelaide somebody would have a snippet of gossip. That in turn added another strand of speculation to an already vast and complex web. Like the flamboyant routes he crafted, Col's legend will endure. It's a marvellous tangle of stories. But his great gift to us was simple: he just loved to climb.

A *Wild* contributor since issue no 3, *Quentin Chester* is a freelance journalist and the author of six books about wilderness places. Blog: [quentinchester.blogspot.com](http://quentinchester.blogspot.com)

# Wild's green heart

**Ross Taylor speaks to one of Wild's founders, Brian Walters**

**T**it was a long time before I met Brian Walters. For a year or two we just traded emails. As one of the founders of Wild and a barrister, Brian has always read anything that could potentially get Wild into trouble. Thus, dutifully, every deadline I email Brian the Green Pages so that he can make sure that we haven't defamed Gunn or anyone else with deep pockets.

When we did finally meet it was in sad circumstances, at the funeral of the founding editor of Wild, Chris Baxter. Brian and Chris were not only co-founders of Wild, they were close friends and long-time walking partners. Despite all the history, I hadn't quite realised how deep their friendship was until that meeting.

The story of how Chris, Brian and graphic designer Michael Collie met in the Victorian High Country and then started Wild is well known. But despite the fact that Brian has written many articles for Wild over the years, less is known about the man himself, even though he has had a long and successful public life as a prominent Senior Counsel, has been a president of Liberty Victoria and is now the Greens' candidate for the seat of Melbourne in the upcoming Victorian state election.

So, after Brian agreed to be interviewed, I pedalled off on the short bike ride to his office in Little Lonsdale Street. In his spacious chambers, overlooked by images of wild places in Southwest Tasmania, Brian is much more at ease than at our first meeting.

Brian inherited his love of the bush from his father, an English-born mycologist who assembled the major Australian collection of fungi. Right from the beginning Brian and his three brothers spent much of their childhood years outdoors.

'We had holidays in Tarra Valley and my father built a house in Sorrento, so we were roaming along the clifftops down there,' he tells me. 'We often went for day trips to the Dandenongs and various other places.'

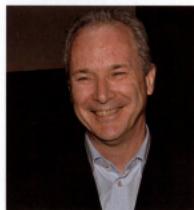
It was with his older brother John and John's future wife that Brian did his first 'proper' bushwalk to the Bluff in the Howqua region of the Victorian High

Country. It would also almost be Brian's last, after they hit a patch of wild weather. On the first day it snowed, but it was on the second day after leaving the treeline that things got really hairy.

'The wind picked up. It was wailing like a banshee, it was incredibly powerful. I was not equipped for this, I can remember what I was wearing: desert boots, a scout hat, a cheap plastic raincoat from Coles, no gloves – I put socks on my hands to work as mittens. The scout hat could not be removed, it was frozen to my hair.'

In the gap between Mt Eadley Stoney and the Bluff the three of them had to link arms and crawl across the ground to stop being blown over. At the summit of the Bluff in poor visibility they struggled to find a way through the cliffs that guard the way down. It was while descending through the cliff line that Brian lost his pack.

'When I passed the pack down it clipped on a little ledge, flipped over my brother's head, then went bouncing down, down, down and disappeared into the treeline. So my brother hared-off



**'Seeing people effected by their struggle for the environment made me realise that there are other things that you need, like human rights.'**

after it, because the pack had in it, amongst other things, the car keys.'

His brother eventually found the pack and the precious car keys and as a group they made their way to safety, but the intensity of the experience made an indelible mark on the young man.

'We made our way back down to Seven Mile Creek feeling the exhilaration of survival. I think it remains the most serious situation I have ever experienced on a bushwalk. I have never stopped since though.'

Most of Brian's walking in the 1970s was done with Michael Collie. Michael tells me about one trip they did to Tasmania in 1978 where he met Brian after a legal conference in Hobart. After Brian had packed away his tuxedo and donned his bushwalking gear, the two of them walked the Overland Track. Arriving at Lake St Clair, they were expecting a box of food to be



dropped off by the shuttle bus so they could continue on to Frenchmans Cap. It hadn't arrived. 'So we waited there for three days and ate out of rubbish bins. This was better than it sounds because all these buses would come through and stop for lunch. Afterwards the bins were bulging with cardboard picnic lunch boxes. We descended on them like vultures. I actually quite like that about Brian. He is unassuming. There we were, the up-and-coming barrister, and me, living like urchins.'

Eventually their box of food turned up and they made their way to Frenchmans. Unfortunately they had terrible weather the day they reached the summit, so there was no view. But this didn't deter them: 'On the last night before we were about to leave, we looked out of the hut and saw stars, so we decided we would do a nighttime ascent. It was the most beautiful summit experience.

I have photos of the surrounding peaks combing clouds – you know, the clouds slipping down through the peaks – the whole landscape was mauve and we descended to the hut casting moon shadows on the quartz.'

In his final year of school Brian had to decide what university course he would choose. His natural inclination was for the arts and literature but his parents counselled him to do something that would also involve income. 'So I compromised and did Arts/Law.'

As it turned out, Brian had a natural aptitude for the law, and through his career he has fought and won many prominent, high-profile cases. At times though, he has experienced doubts about his profession and whether he is contributing to justice. Perhaps part of his love-hate relationship with the law is because of its adversarial nature.

*Brian Walters on the summit of Frenchmans Cap, Tasmania. Michael Collie. Far left, Brian at his recent campaign launch for the Greens in the seat of Melbourne. Peter Campbell*

'I think that having this relationship is a bit inherent in being a lawyer, because when you win a case you think you're really good at it and when you lose a case you think you never will be any good at it.'

One of Brian's biggest contributions to *Wild* – apart from coming up with the name (it's thanks to Brian you aren't reading *High & Wild*) – was his idea to create the Green Pages, a department unique among outdoor magazines. I ask him about the effect bushwalking had on his environmental consciousness: 'When I was getting under way with my bushwalking,

**Right, younger days, Brian (on left) and Michael Collie deep in the Little River Gorge, Victoria.** Collie Collection

through the 1970s, it happened to be the time that woodchipping was taking off through the Victorian Alps. It was very painful to see large areas of beautiful bush reduced to "Battle of the Somme destruction", and again being told that this was "progress" and it would all be fine.'

Brian was part of a generation of environmentalists who were increasingly disenchanted with traditional ideas of what constituted 'progress'.

'The idea you would do so much damage and that somehow this was progress was second-nature to many people. But it's progress in a way that is not progressive and is not positive for the future of the world.' This growing philosophical division came to a head in the iconic environmental battle fought over the future of the Franklin River.

The fight for the Franklin was heavily covered in *Wild*, and Brian actually interviewed Bob Brown for an early issue, back when he was the director of what was then called the Tasmanian Wilderness Society. In 1982 Brian rafted down the Franklin and joined the blockade, and he also gave legal advice and helped out in a variety of other ways.

'I was peripheral rather than central, but passionate about the outcome and it seemed to me unthinkable that you would flood it,' Brian says. When the Franklin River was eventually saved, 'It was an intoxicating victory. It had so many twists and turns in it, but it was wonderful to be part of.'

Brian's environmental consciousness also fed into his growing awareness of the interconnectedness of the law, the environment and a just and fair society for all. 'Seeing people effected by their struggle for the environment made me realise that there are other things that you need, like human rights. You can't just protect the environment without protecting human rights. You need to approach this in a non-violent way or you do other damage. And then you need grassroots democracy because you need people right across the board to have input into decision-making if they're going to be the best decisions, and that effects the environment too.'

His passion for human rights has meant that he has been heavily involved with Liberty Victoria, where he is still on the governing committee. He has also been involved with some human rights cases that garnered a lot of media attention at the time. 'We took the Tampa case in relation to asylum seekers in 2001, and we have been active in relation to issues like David Hicks and Jack Thomas and a range of other human rights issues.'

This passion for human rights, the



## **'One of Brian's biggest contributions to *Wild* – apart from coming up with the name (it's thanks to Brian you aren't reading *High & Wild*) – was his idea to create the Green Pages, a department unique among outdoor magazines.'**

environment and grassroots democracy has led him to his latest adventure: standing for the Greens in the seat of Melbourne. Brian has a very good chance of winning the seat, which was recently won at a federal level by the Greens' Adam Bandt.

I speak to Bob Brown, the leader of the Australian Greens, about Brian: 'He would be a very strong voice for Melbourne, but also for Victoria generally, on the floor of the house, if elected. Both the big parties are back in the last century. Brian's got a very clear and strong idea of how the threats of climate change and other challenges of this century can be turned into advantage and opportunity.'

Another of Brian's friends, broadcaster and author Paul Collins, talks to me about Brian's contribution to the environmental movement: 'I think building into the structure of Australian law environmental protection is important, because you do need these structural protections that are an accepted part of the legal system and I do think that the kinds of cases that Brian has fought, and many of which he has won, have helped achieve this.' He also thinks that people like Brian have helped make environmental issues mainstream: 'People tend to caricature the environmental movement as a lot of feral greenies...now the last thing you could say about Brian Walters is that he looks alternative. I mean

he is very much a mainstream, middle class person that works in a traditional and conservative profession.'

Bob Brown says a similar thing: 'There are not too many Senior Counsels who are working members of the Greens – let alone the great advocacy he has had for social justice with Liberty Victoria – I just think having a barrister of his stature available to give good, strong advice has been enormously important to the Greens, certainly to me as the leader of the Greens nationally.'

Brown goes on to tell me that Brian's advice was crucial to the Greens rejection of the Rudd Government's carbon trading emissions scheme, which he predicted would lead to massive compensation payouts to polluters in the future.

At 56 years of age, Brian has accomplished an enormous amount in his life. Aside from a successful career, he has a 25-year marriage to his wife, Sally Polmear. He has two daughters, Rachel (20) and Georgia (18), who are both studying at Melbourne Uni. His wife and daughters are all bushwalkers and they have done many family trips together.

That 18-year-old who wanted to study literature and art never let go of that dream. Brian reads an enormous amount; Collie tells me it is probably his most significant hobby. He still writes and reads poetry and indulges his love for Mahler. He has also written several screenplays that have been turned into short films, *Jumping Jack* and *Union Jack* (still in production), as well as a book, *Slopping on the Wrists: Dekimation, Developers and Community Activism*.

Despite a busy life, Brian's love of the bush is still as strong as ever. 'I think climbing mountains and getting out into wild areas of wilderness and bush is a way of connecting with something far greater than ourselves. It reminds you of your place in the world. I've reached the stage where if I don't go into the bush every once in a while I go a bit spare. It's a really important part of who I am.'

Like many intellectual people, Brian does have a certain reserve or gravitas, but behind that lies what is obviously a huge passion for life. On Brian's blog I come across a poem called *Autumn* that he wrote. Perhaps its final verse says more about him than anything I could say myself:

Yes. Yes. Always, ever –  
Earth and sea and sky.  
The faith to build,  
The hope to bond,  
The love to bind together.  
Good endures and evil withers  
Fades and rots like straw.  
But life will give – and give again –  
And giving, find still more.

[brianwalters.com.au](http://brianwalters.com.au)

[brianwaltersmelbourne.blogspot.com](http://brianwaltersmelbourne.blogspot.com)

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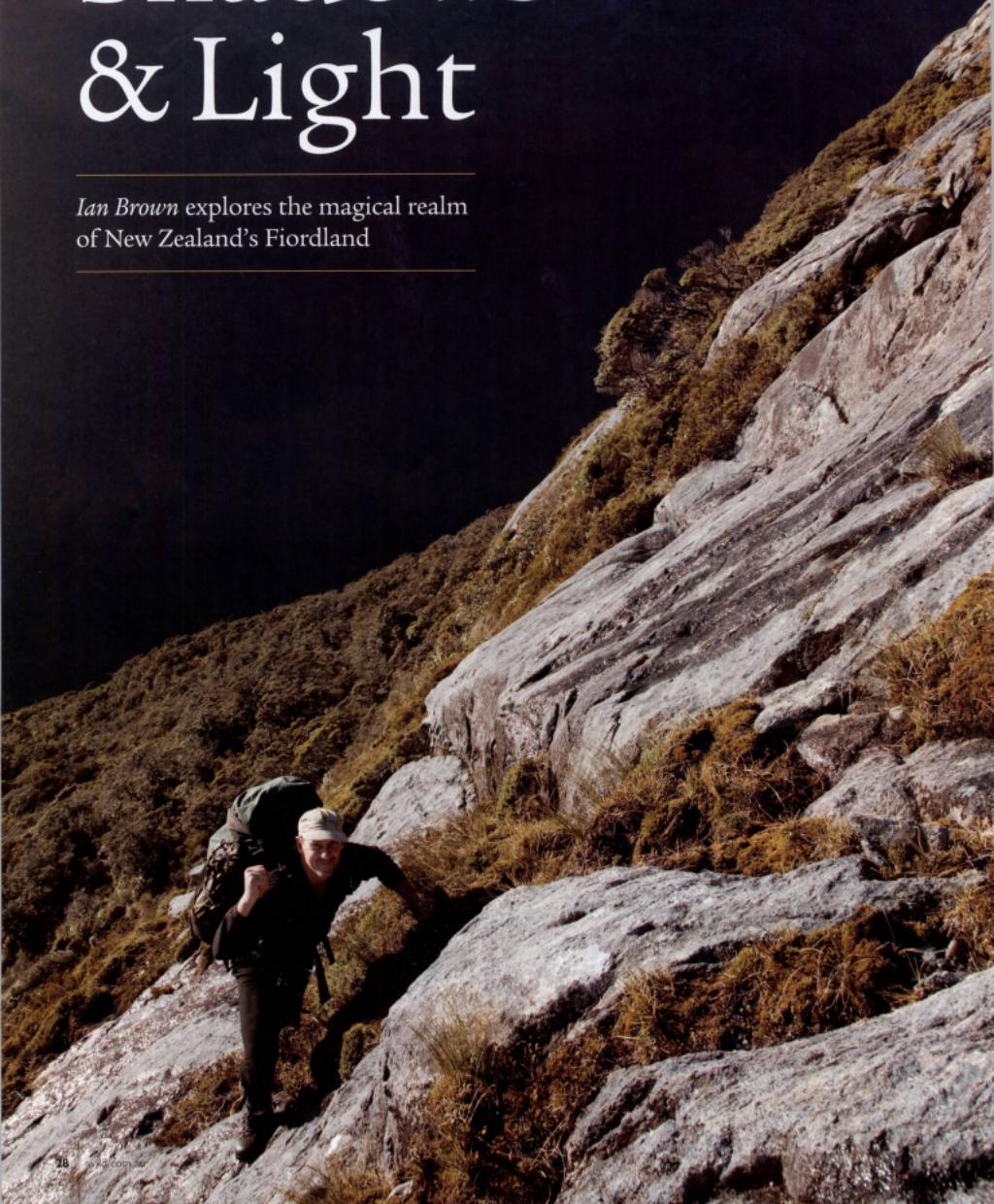
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# Shadows & Light

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*Ian Brown explores the magical realm of New Zealand's Fiordland*

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First, there was the dream. And then there was the reality. But I'm going to start with the dream, because that's the most important bit. Imagine prancing over alpine turf and rocking along the high ridges of New Zealand's Fiordland in warm sunshine. Mile after mile of pristine glacier-carved basins, bejewelled with lakes, flowers and streams. Dodging around spiry peaks, climbing a few. Camping at sunset with the astounding Fiordland peaks spreading to the horizon, dark green trenches of forest way below.

Decades ago I bought a set of topo maps covering Fiordland National Park, a world heritage area of staggering topography. That was my first mistake. You see, I love poring over maps of wild country and it doesn't come much wilder than Fiordland. I plotted routes along the spines of mountains and wondered which had been walked before. I figured out a fairly mild 'familiarisation' trip and held on to it for many long years. The idea was to traverse 50 kilometres of mountains in a great arc, first along the main divide west of Lake Te Anau, then eastwards along the Kepler Mountains, to finish on the Kepler Track.

It was an ambitious plan, an exhilarating dream, a beautiful thing that remained remote in every sense. When the time finally came, however, the trickiest part of the reality was finding someone to share the madness. Parrish Robbins seemed to fit the bill. A staunch fellow and an accomplished outdoorsman with an adventurous bent. (The fact that he started out as an American was only a minor concern.) He was quickly intrigued, then enthusiastic. Later he claimed I never told him about the 200 rain days a year, and some other trivial matters. I hope he doesn't hate me.

Then there was the reality of the Takahe Special Area: a restricted zone covering the Murchison Mountains and one of the last habitats where the takahe – a very rare purple chook – is still hanging on. Trampers can only use a couple of routes in this area, and then only in January and February. Unfortunately, we couldn't go in that window. So here was this big chunk of forbidden ground that we needed to cross to reach the western mountains. Our solution, if you could call it that, was to reach the main divide by climbing the steep ridge right on the boundary of the closed area, then to skirt the western edge of the Special Area. The park ranger thought that would be okay, but it was the dodgiest bit of our plan, hard to escape in a storm and with several spots where impassable cliffs might lurk.



So we made our plans and the more we planned the more other concerns began to dawn. Could I handle such an arduous walk? How would I keep up with Parrish? What about the slippery descents above huge, scary drops? Then there was the legendary Fiordland weather and the very real chance of getting stuck up high in a hurricane. My sleep was disturbed by haunting premonitions.

**CONCERN TURNED TO TERROR** upon arrival in Te Anau. I'd been tracking the weather pattern for a month – a westerly flow with embedded fronts, over and over again – but now we stood gaping at the four-day forecast posted outside the national park office. Day one was slapped with a Severe Weather Alert: 'intense' rain with falls of up to 300 millimetres in 12 hours; winds up to 120 kilometres per hour; then snowfalls down to 800 metres. On and on it went. New Zealand gothic.

I tried to run away, anywhere east, but Parrish was unmoved. He made me ring up Steve the boatman and arrange our drop-off that very afternoon. As we pounded through rising 'seas' across Lake Te Anau, the nor'wester gathered force. Steve turfed us out and scooted away. We were left standing on the shore, abandoned in the wilderness for 13 days, armed only with a saphone. Our ridge reared up 1200 metres into the rain like a breaking green wave – and we were on the wrong side of a very large stream. Steve was sure he'd be returning the next day to pull us out.

Luckily, fine planning meant we had a hut to cower in. We checked out the river

*A backlit Parrish Robbins with unnamed western peaks behind.*

**Far page,** climbing steep bluffs out of Large Burn. All photos by the author

crossing, then waited for what darkness would bring. Just after 9pm, right on schedule, rain broke over the hut like it was dropped from a water-bomber. It roared and pounded all night. About 300 millimetres I reckon. The rain was so loud we couldn't hear the wind.

Daybreak revealed trees down all through the forest. The river was a writhing animal. Up on the mountain we would have been scraped off into the void like sandflies. Back in civilisation the wind clocked 140 kilometres per hour through Te Anau. The Milford Road was taken out by washaways and fallen trees. Just another NZ 'run-off even'. We waited, pacing the hut and going over the options again and again. I wanted to call Steve back, but I think I mentioned that Parrish is made of sterner stuff.

Heavy snow lay on the mountain tops the next day. We couldn't go up there, and we couldn't take the soft option up the forbidden Woodrow Burn Track. Parrish was sure we could dig ourselves in even deeper. 'We can go north up the Doon River, cross over the divide and turn south up the Large Burn,' he opined. 'Then we might be able to go high when the weather clears.'

He had the advantage of not having walked in Fiordland before. North was the opposite of where we needed to go, and wallowing in waterlogged valleys was surely madness. So that's what we did.



## 'Daybreak revealed trees down all through the forest. The river was a writhing animal. Up on the mountain we would have been scraped off into the void like sandflies.'

Escaping the stultifying hut we splashed into the evergreen world. With tentative toe dipping, we managed to find a way across the powerful Woodrow Burn that was only thigh-deep. Junction Burn was up to our armpits, but much more fun. At the base of our forsaken ridge, we turned away and squeezed through magnificent forest of moss and boulders to find the Doon looking like the Franklin River in flood. 'Maybe we should stay on this side,' I helpfully suggested. And all the while it rained. And rained. For the next four days.

Squelching onwards, we pushed through drenching vegetation, hunted after deer tracks and crossed side stream after side stream, waist-deep and freshly chilled. Dusk forced a stop on the only dryish spot on the river levee. The sandflies were grateful for a tent to shelter in.

And so it went. Each morning we'd struggle from our damp bags, pull on sodden clothes, emerge into the rain and fumble off into the faint glow of primeval green. Due to some Kiwi time warp, in late March until about 10am you just need a headtorch to find your way through the forest in these deep, U-shaped valleys. But that's not the only benefit of the valleys. They also gather all the mountain drainage on to the flats so that trampers can frolic in endless swamps and sucking mudholes.

On the third day we topped Doon River,

hauling ourselves up some vertiginous prison-bar thickets to find a pass at 1000 metres. Beside a small tarn, surrounded by turf, rock and churning fog, we looked at each other through wind-stung, shivering eyes. 'So this is the top. Looks nice. Let's go down.' Down we went, but not before thrashing backwards and forwards at the bush line to outflank huge cliffs. Down, down and down. Almost to sea level. It took us most of the day and, even then, we nearly didn't make it before dark. Many times we had to crawl sideways through thick bush to avoid bluffs that were overhanging with waves of vegetation. Splashing out to the Large Burn (and its ridiculous name) we lucked on to a rare mossy clearing and crashed. We had turned south at last, but in the whole day moved only four kilometres.

The next day we made six. The forest was slow-going with thick ferns, boulderfields and swimming pools. Our walking poles were invaluable for staying upright when every footfall was treacherously soft. The forests were a wonder to behold: massive old beech trees and ancient podocars like rimu and totara, all hung with swathes of bright green moss. As we splashed and swam, we felt privileged to be in such superb and wild forest – forest that can only exist with ten metres of annual rainfall. But still, a highlight was bursting out of the green to wade easily along Lake Mackinnon, with waterfalls all

around, crashing down out of the clouds.

On the fifth day, as predicted, the rain began to lift. We cranked up the saphrone for a forecast: tomorrow, fine; then another nor'wester. We were at a decision point – the foot of the next pass. Either over the saddle and on with the valley trudge, or break out on to the tops, and maybe get stuck up there in more foulness. In the end it was no choice at all. This was what we'd come for.

**TURNING OUR BIG GRINS** left towards the main divide, we passed below the overbearing cone of Mt Irene (1859 metres), the highest peak in the area, and pushed past a forest-bound lake and up some tight and steep goblin forest. Pulling up, arm over arm, exhausted, we broke out to a rocky shoulder of crystalline slabs striped with stunted greenery. It looked steep.

Moir's guide to tramping in Fiordland says that 'steep' has been described as where the sap from the snowgrass seeps out between your clenched fingers. Indeed, snowgrass and its wiry allies make fine grips. Pulling on them is a Kiwi art form. Grasping handfuls of short-and-curly, we made good time up the bluffs, which were lit by the evening sun. It didn't pay to look down, but climber Parrish was loving it.

When we got to the crest of the spur it was everything we'd dreamed of – clean rock, firm turf and little tarns. The western peaks lifted into view as we climbed. They looked like they'd been cut out of green velvet, one unnamed spire after another. Exhausted, we made camp with a view as the sun sank into the sea in a blaze of yellow. For the first time, I was able to pull out my lightweight tripod and dance around



**Clockwise from above,** climbing above Large Burn, Mt Irene behind. Thoughtful Parrish and Large Burn. The author displaying his unerring feel for fashion. Traversing the summit ridge of peak 1577 metres. **Far page,** Parrish in superb forest at the head of the Doon River.

snapping pics. Parrish pitched the tent.

A windy night froze the tent and brought down cloud billowing over the main range. Rugged up, we completed the ascent to a ridgeline knoll at 1439 metres. Fiordland spun around us in all its topographic glory. The gale was enough to blow a body away, so we had to give up a high sidle around Irene and our chance at the summit. It was better to make miles along the tops while we could and try to avoid an early evacuation, or worse: a shameful escape through the forbidden zone.

As we crossed a sheltered tussock basin below Irene, I thought it was like walking through Tolkien's Lothlórien. Above reared the bare rock and glacier ice of the mountain, head and shoulders above all the rest, while around us the waving grass was embroidered with pools and little chuckling creeks. A waterfall thundered down from a lake. We took a restful moment to sit upon a rock in the warm sunshine, scoff a snack and soak up the scene. It was the first time in six days that we'd stopped in comfort.

By five o'clock it was 'Goodnight Irene'.



We'd passed the mountain and Robin Saddle to reach a point on the divide where we had to go over a high mountain. It was too late in the day to commit, and we'd already travelled nine kilometres and climbed nearly 1000 metres: the equal of the day before. We wanted enough left in the tank for a big effort the following day: another 12 kilometres (and another 1000-metre climb) over the tops to Lake Eva at the start of the Keplers. So we pitched the tent and dried a few things off in the last of the sunlight.

Dawn's light revealed a threatening sky of lowering cloud. We left quickly, keen to get over the mountain to Te Au Pass before the nor'wester belted us. The first step up the mountain was an intimidating grass-pull up a cliff, but it went easily. Then gentle rock slopes led up into cloud and drizzle, hiding the summit knife-edge streaked with snow. Superb scrambling got us to a 1577-metre peaklet, perhaps the highest point of the trip if we failed to reach the Keplers at the end, which was looking evermore likely. In an emotional moment we stopped to shake hands before getting out the compass and plunging eastwards down a long, rocky ramp into the pass. We were surprised to cross an unmapped glacier, which at only 1200 metres must be one of the lowest in southern Fiordland.

Out of the cloud again, the onward traverse was looking good. Lots of steep

**Right,** on the second day of the main divide traverse. **Bottom,** a windy, threatening morning on the main divide.

grass around some massive rock pyramids that blocked the range. A quick bite and we were away, sidling and climbing past the trench-like head of the Cozette Burn. A kea swooped in and heckled our intrusion. We had to descend to the bush line to get around a skirt of huge cliffs hanging from peak 1694 metres, then climb all the way back up to the final saddle at 1320 metres. That's where the cold rain blew in and harried us for what was left of the day. Tired, we bumbled through a maze of tarns on a vast rock plateau, finding our way to a most welcome sight from the edge of a massive cirque: lakes Lone and Eva cradled below, with the gothic spires of Mt Baird rising beyond. The Keplers at last. Sheets of rain followed past.

**I ALMOST SHED A TEAR.** For all those years of dreaming over maps. For how magnificent the high travelling had turned out to be. For still being able to do such a walk. Even if we didn't complete the Keplers, we'd traversed 20 kilometres of main divide, gotten past the 'forbidden zone' and reached a legal escape route.

Well, not quite. We still had to make a high side across what felt like miles of talus and gullies to reach a point where we could descend easy tussock to the lakes. Scooting down in fading light, we waded the creek connecting the lakes and stumbled through patchy scrub to hunt for a well-drained camp on the lip of the Gorge Burn valley.

Another decision point. We had four days' food and time left. We'd need every one of those days to traverse the Keplers out to Te Anau. We called up the forecast: four days of rain. Any high route was out of the question. Maybe we could do another valley bypass, crossing one col, just for the satisfaction of walking out. Let's sleep on it.

Day eight of walking was already set. We had to start down Gorge Burn and get past the cliff-girt Lake Boomerang. Then we would face our final choice. In the rain we slept in, dragging ourselves out late into a burst of sunbeams to swim into the soaking bush. It was hard work all day. Lots of scrambling through steepness and boulders in the forest. Lots of water. A lovely green sward at Lake Cecil tempted us to camp. The rain poured down and we fired up the saphone. No break in the weather, no chance for the Keplers, so we made another call. 'Hey Steve, can you pick us up at Gorge Burn tomorrow?'

'Okay, what time?'

'How about one o'clock?' 'See you then.'

That was it. It was over.

As it was, the final descent of the valley was slowed by thick forest and fallen trees. Steady rain came down and deer tracks were scarce. We had to push hard, fearing we wouldn't make the rendezvous. At five minutes to one we stumbled out of the forest on to the crunchy gravel of Lake Te Anau's shoreline. Over ten days we'd had just one fine day. Our sodden packs, parkas and heads were caked in mosses and bits of bark. We'd begun to compost into the forest. The boat was there, waiting.

Fiordland gets under your skin – and your fingernails – and little bits of it end up in your ears, and other places. You can spend a quiet evening in the tent scratching it out of your tangled hair. Most of all, Fiordland gets into your soul. The valleys and the forests, the presence and the power, seep in with the water and take root. Then just occasionally the sun breaks through and blesses one of those days: a bright, shining gem of a day that casts light on to all the rest. And one day is enough. Oh yes, it's enough for the dream. **W**

*Ian Brown* lives in the Blue Mountains, from where he consults on environmental stuff, walks and climbs, writes a bit, gathers nature photographs, produces occasional publications, and hatches schemes to visit wild places. Sometimes he carries them out.





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# On a Knife Edge

David Neilson tells the previously unreported story of the first ascent of Blade Ridge on Federation Peak, a journey that would end on the shores of Lake Pedder but continue on in other ways

**T**he English climber Wilfrid Noyce (a member of the 1953 Everest expedition), wrote a book called *The Springs of Adventure*. In it, he analyses why people seek out adventurous activities. Early in his book, Noyce decided he needed a better definition for adventure than found in his dictionary. This is what he came up with: 'A novel enterprise undertaken for its own sake'. This seems an appropriate description for our adventure to Federation Peak.

It was the summer of 1968 and I was 21. I had just finished my first season climbing in the Southern Alps in New Zealand and had returned to Melbourne. My friend Rod Harris had spent the summer working as an Outward Bound instructor. We had done a lot of rockclimbing together, mainly at Mt Arapiles. From somewhere came the idea to make an attempt on the then unclimbed Blade Ridge on Federation Peak in Southwest Tasmania. Rod had been on a bushwalking trip to Federation Peak the previous summer and had seen the soaring quartz spine of Blade Ridge firsthand. We also knew several of the team of Victorian climbers who had made an unsuccessful attempt on the Blade in 1966.

Sitting at one end of the Eastern Arthur Range, Federation Peak is the most spectacular peak in Southwest Tasmania. Surrounded by glacial lakes, its sheer walls rise from the valley floor on two sides, while on the other sides it sits above the crest of the range. In a land with so little mountainous country, Federation is one of the few true climbers' peaks found in Australia. Blade Ridge itself is a slender knife-like ridge that rises from the valley on the northwest side of the peak. The ridge is vertical at first, until it's cut by three horizontal steps, the last of

which abuts on to the northwest face. From here the rock forms one continuous sweep to the summit, which is over 600 metres above the valley floor.

In 1961 a party comprising Bob Jones, Jack O'Halloran, Geoff Shaw and Robin Dunse made the audacious first ascent of the northwest face. They approached the face from a side gully, avoiding the Blade. In 1961 it was probably the most remote climb in Australia. It was certainly among the most difficult climbs of the era and a great achievement.

Besides climbing with Rod, I also climbed extensively with Pete Heddles, who had also been a part of our first discussions about the trip some months previously. With only five days until we had to catch the ferry to Tasmania, we asked Pete and another climbing friend, Jack Woods, if they were interested in joining us. We had all started our climbing together at Monash University and, despite the short notice, they both agreed to come.

We spent the few days before we were due to leave madly dashing around buying food and extra climbing equipment. The Princess of Tasmania was fully booked when we turned up on Monday night. For a while it looked like our adventure might be stopped in its tracks, but Rod's father – with forceful persuasion – managed to get us a passage sleeping on the floor in the bar.

WE HITCHED FROM DEVONPORT to Hobart, bought more food, finished packing the airdrops and took them out to Cambridge Airport. The use of airdrops – usually utilising five-gallon metal drums wrapped with hessian padding – had developed as a way of making extensive bushwalking trips in Tassie's southwest feasible. They were also good for getting climbing equipment dropped in. By pure good fortune it turned out that cans of beer could also survive the drop from a great

height. (Airdrops were banned in the late-1970s for environmental reasons.)

We hitched to Geeveston, and then a friend of my father's generously gave us a lift to the end of the Arve Road. It was late in the afternoon by this time and we walked along the Huon River to Blakes Opening in the dark. The following day we climbed up Red Rag Scarp on to the Picton Range. This route over the Pictons was a common approach to Federation before the logging road was put in to Farmhouse Creek. We continued beneath the shattered dolerite summit of Mt Picton, passing North Lake, and eventually camped at Winking Eye Creek. Since the weather looked fine, with a red sunset over Mount Anne, we slept out.

Awoken by the sun we were soon away. After climbing up to Hewardia Ridge, we obtained our first good views of this fascinating and, for three of us at least, unknown land. In the distance to the west lay Arthur Plains flanked by the jagged Western Arthurs. Below us the valley of the Cracraft River cleaved its way south where it branched, and at the head of the West Cracraft stood the Eastern Arthurs and Federation Peak. Even at a distance, Federation Peak stood apart.

Three days later we were toiling up through the tangled forest of Moss Ridge. We had luck with the weather and it was overcast and cool as we climbed the steep ridge, eventually reaching Béchervaise Plateau. This small plateau, set high on the slopes of Federation, was to be our home for the next two weeks. It was named after John Béchervaise, who made the first ascent of Federation Peak in 1949 with a group of students from Geelong College. Their ascent had been helped significantly by the earlier exploratory work of Hobart bushwalkers, including Leo Luckman, Ron Smith, Nancy Shaw and Bill Jackson. However, Béchervaise had acquired considerable rockclimbing skills

**Left, Federation Peak from the northern end of the Eastern Arthurs. The Blade is the righthand jagged ridge rising from the valley to the base of the Northwest Face. All uncredited photos by the author**

in England and this certainly played a role in his reaching the summit.

I never met John Béchervaise, but he was an inspiring teacher and outdoor leader. He led several ANARE expeditions to Antarctica in the 1950s, was editor of *Walkabout* magazine for several years and wrote several fine books. In later years I was to follow in his footsteps or at least in places that had been named after him. I bivouacked on Béchervaise Island near Mawson Station in Antarctica and spent a night in a tent at the foot of Mt Béchervaise in the remote Prince Charles Mountains with the temperature at -25°C.

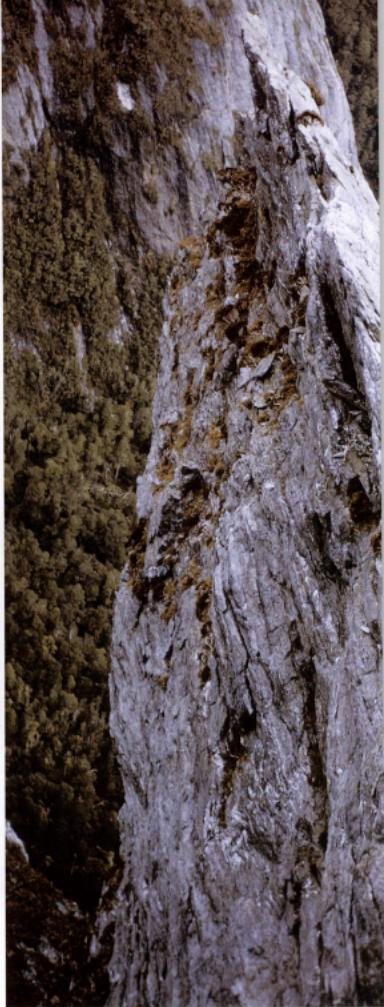
The day after arriving we climbed Federation by the Climbing Gully, which was the route pioneered by Béchervaise. The following day we did several short climbs on the northeast face and reconnoitred the northwest face and Blade Ridge from high ridges on either side.

A BLAST OF BAD WEATHER held us up here until we awoke to a clear sunrise several days later and decided to attempt the climb. We sorted our climbing gear, had breakfast and were soon scrambling down the steep scree chute that drops from the plateau to the valley that contains the Northern Lakes. The vegetation in the valley surrounding the lakes takes the form of dense temperate rainforest, with a jumbled mass of moss-covered fallen trees on the forest floor. We threaded our way through this jungle and soon cliffs began to soar above us. It was difficult to work out which cliff formed the bottom of Blade Ridge, but after an exhaustive search we decided we had the right one.

A short battle with steep scrub followed, before we were finally able to rope up and the climb was under way. The steepness of the rock was immediately noticeable and this, together with the small stances, made the climbing demanding. The rock was quartzite and its firm, sharp nature was a joy to move on. We climbed higher, keeping mainly to the front of the ridge but occasionally moving around to the side.

By coincidence a group of friends from the Monash Bushwalking Club arrived that afternoon at the Devils Thumb, above Thwaites Plateau. This group, including my future partner Karen Alexander, was on its way to Hanging Lake. From the Devils Thumb they had a spectacular view of Blade Ridge and us climbing. We were all wearing red helmets that stood out clearly and they watched us for several hours.

We were climbing in two pairs that afternoon. Pete and Rod were on a rope below Jack and me. Pete was leading the lower rope when he strayed on to more difficult ground and fell. To their horror – and our own – the group on the Thumb watched as Pete plummeted 20 metres,



**Clockwise from above,** Rod Harris climbing on the Blade above the first step. Harris climbing on Northwest face with the main overhang above him and the bottom of the exit chimney in the top left of the photo. Jack Woods traversing the third and final step on the Blade. David Neilson, Pete Heddles and Jack Woods at the bivouac just off to one side of the belay; Heddles looking a little shaken-up after his 20-metre fall. Rod Harris

hardly touching the rock on the way down; it was so steep. He was only saved by pure luck, when the rope caught over the trunk of a stout scoria bush, letting Rod stop his fall with a waist-belay. Shaken but uninjured, Pete was able to continue climbing, but it had been a narrow escape and a reminder of just how isolated our situation was.

Towards the end of the first day, in fading light, we traversed into a steep gully on the righthand side of the ridge. We found a passable bivvy, although we kept sliding downhill during the night only to be stopped by our tied-off rope belays.

Overnight the clouds rolled in. A storm seemed likely, but we decided to continue. We soon reached the first step on the ridge. Traversing this incredible knife-like ridge with its three horizontal steps was incredible. The valley floor was now way below us and because we were still well out from the main face, it felt incredibly airy; as though we were attached to terra firma by a slender thread.

Eventually arriving at the junction of the third step and the northwest face, we stopped for a bite to eat and surveyed the route of the 1961 party, which we would now be following.

Luckily the storm clouds had now dispersed. We found the lower pitches of the face straightforward, but the upper part of the face was guarded by a large overhang,



1961 climbers, but even so the last 50 metres were a race against the light. We reached the top just as the sun was setting.

We were excited and relieved to have completed the climb. At over 600 metres, it is one of the longest climbs in Australia. This and the dramatic surroundings make it a great adventure. It is undoubtedly the most rewarding route to the summit of Federation and we had been fortunate to be able to make the first ascent of the lower half.

In the encroaching darkness we found our way down the Climbing Gully and back to our camp. Our friends were now also camped at Béchervaise Plateau. They had a good fire going, the beer tasted great, and we celebrated our success well into the night.

AFTER A REST DAY we were ready to tackle more climbing, but the weather had other ideas. It rained almost continuously for a week. Our cotton japara tent did not have a sewn-in groundsheet and we had to shift our campsite when water started flooding in. Rod and Jack managed half a day's climbing, but after the seventh day of rain things were very soggy inside the tent. We were also cold and getting grumpy, so we decided to retreat.

It was rainy and cold on the morning we packed up and headed down the scree chute. This had been dry when we had gone down to start the climb, but after a week of rain it had turned into a series of waterfalls and was now difficult to descend.

We eventually reached the Northern Lakes and after the steep climb up the Forest Chute came out on to Thwaites Plateau in bleak conditions: sleety rain and thick mist, with visibility down to a hundred metres. We crossed the plateau and slowly negotiated the

traverse around the Four Peaks. The difficult route-finding meant plenty of backtracking and the wet conditions made the rocks slippery and treacherous. By late afternoon we still hadn't reached Goon Moor and it was getting dark, so we stopped for the night in a low scarpia forest. This afforded us some protection from the buffeting wind, but there was barely enough room for the tent.

The downside of having arranged the airdrop was that we now had to carry out the climbing equipment we had dropped in, along with our camping equipment and seven days' food. It was very cold and we were all exhausted and suffering from the weather and our heavy loads. Rod and Jack had gotten wet feet as we descended the scree chute and that evening when they removed their boots they were both showing the first signs of frostbite with painful black toes. Our retreat from Béchervaise was not Napoleon's retreat from Moscow, but it was more of a challenge than we expected.

A new day dawned but the weather's temper was unchanged. Crossing Goon Moor we threaded our way beneath the Needles and the Dial and began the long descent of Luckmans Lead. Towards the bottom we finally walked out of the storm clouds; they had enveloped us for nine days. Down on the plains the sun was breaking through and that evening we had a welcome fire.

Our plan was to finish the trip with a visit to Lake Pedder, so the following day we struck out along the Arthur Plains towards Junction Creek. Jack and Rod's feet were getting better and the weather had fined up. There was a corrugated iron shelter at Junction Creek, saving us the struggle of putting up our sodden tent.

where we had the choice of two routes: a thin direct line going straight through the overhang, or a deep chimney to the left. The first-ascent party climbed the chimney and found this section to be the crux of their climb. They ran out of light as they were negotiating the chimney and were forced to bivy jammed into the chimney on awkward stances. Despite a sleepless night, they completed the climb the following morning.

Rod was keen to try the unclimbed direct line, thinking it would be a great finish to our climb. He made an attempt, but it proved difficult. Since it was getting late in the day we decided to retreat and follow the original line. Climbing the chimney was awkward but within our capabilities, and once done the major difficulties were behind us. We were more fortunate with our timing than the

It was late the next morning when we got away and headed along the old Port Davey track towards Pedder. We were not in a hurry, so it was dusk when we first glimpsed the lake – a thin strip of water set beneath a jagged range of peaks with an evening sky above. By the time we reached the beach darkness had fallen, and as we walked along the broad, flat sand the moon cast its spectral light over the scene.

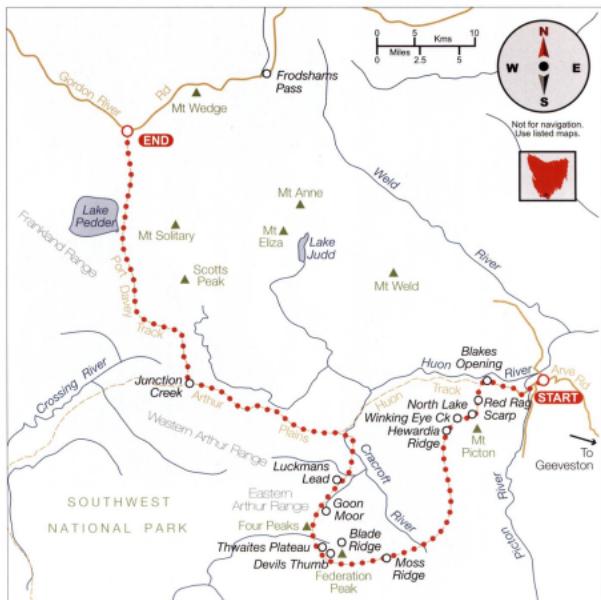
During the night the mist came down. With the rising of the early morning sun, the lake and its surroundings were clothed in a diffuse cloud that lent a soft colour to everything. Gradually the mist lifted, the still waters reflecting the surrounding peaks. The colours became stronger: the rich, dark red of the water, the pink and white of the quartzite sands, and the vivid greens of the trees and vegetation.

It was a beautiful scene. We would like to have stayed, but we were now short on time and we left that day for the walk out to the Gordon Road. By evening we were back in Melbourne, the high from the success of our grand adventure softening the rude shock of civilisation.

We had fulfilled Noyce's definition and undertaken a novel enterprise for its own sake. But looking back now I realise there was a more important outcome in terms of the future directions I would take with my life. The trip, and crucially the visit to Pedder, was ultimately the catalyst for my decision to leave civil engineering and become a photographer, conservationist and publisher.

Several years after our climbing trip it became clear that the Tasmanian government's hydro-electric scheme was going to flood Lake Pedder unless a spirited community campaign could stop it. I had a small amount to do with this campaign, but I decided that I could possibly make a more substantial contribution by trying to get a book of photographs published showing the beauty of all of Southwest Tasmania, including Lake Pedder. I spent most of the summer of 1972 doing trips to the Southwest and then put the book together. Adelaide publisher Rigby took on the project, but unfortunately *South West Tasmania - A Land of the Wild* didn't come out until 1975. By then Lake Pedder was well and truly flooded by the Serpentine impoundment. I was pleased to have had a book published, but disappointed that it would not play a role in saving the lake.

A group of dedicated people is continuing to work towards having the Serpentine impoundment unflooded. When that happens the original Lake Pedder will once again emerge to beguile us with its exquisite beauty. W



**Right**, Pete Heddles, Jack Woods and Rod Harris at Junction Creek. Pete is inspecting the mail box. **Bottom**, late afternoon light on Lake Pedder before it was dammed (taken in 1972).

*David Neilson* is currently working on publishing a collection of his Antarctic photographs. His other books have been on Patagonia and Wilsons Promontory. He runs Snowgum Press, a small publishing business and previously worked for the Australian Conservation Foundation producing its *Wilderness Diary* and other publications.



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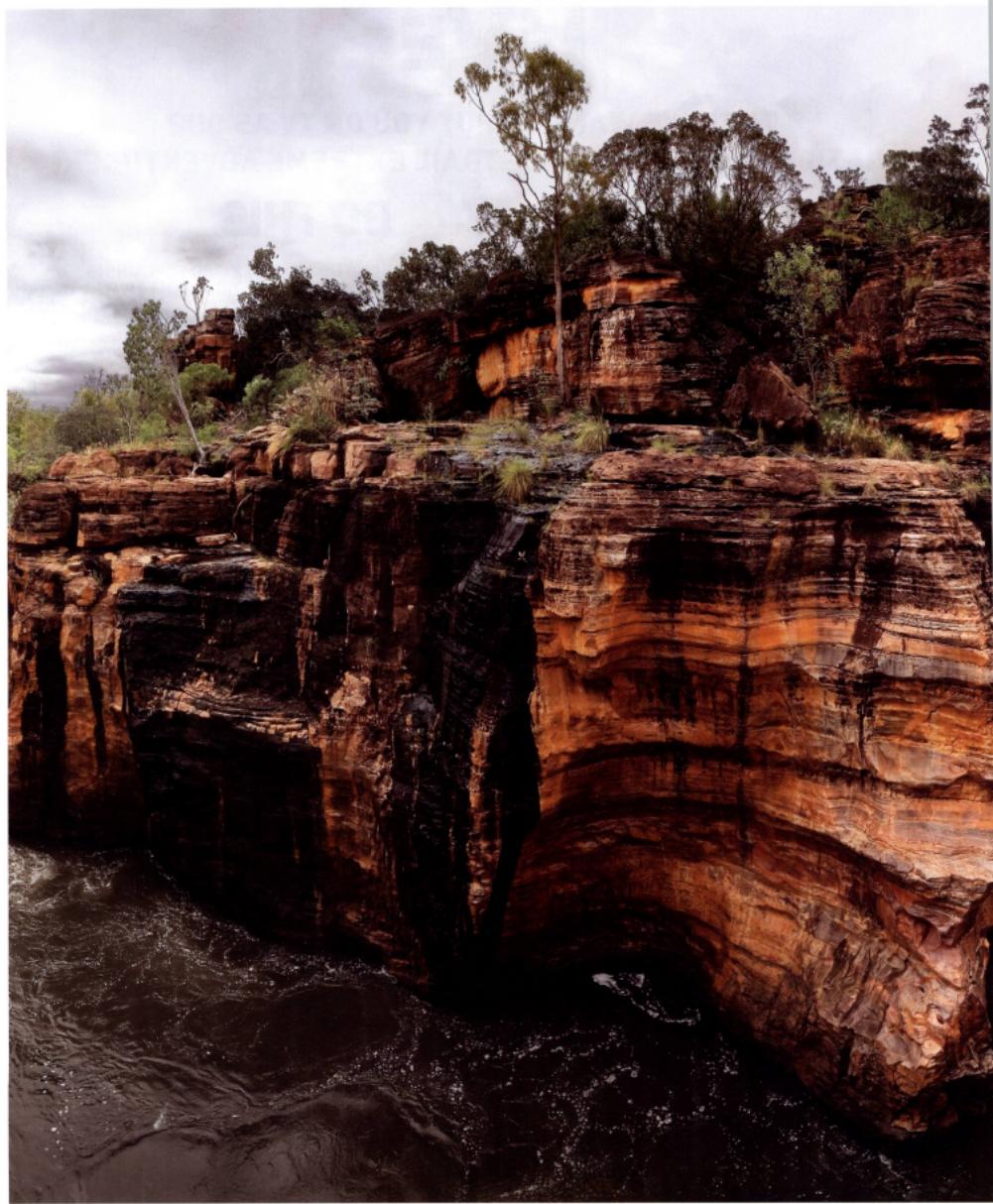
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# Remote & Wild

*Richard Green captures the wild beauty of Arnhem Land*

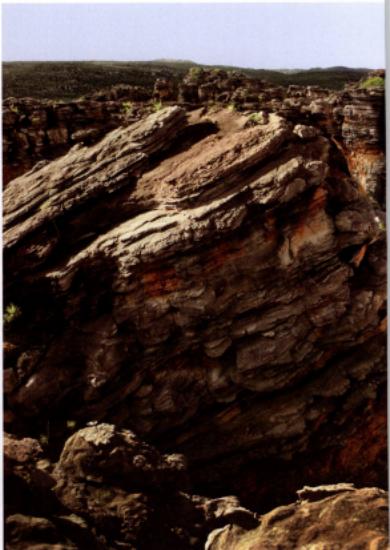


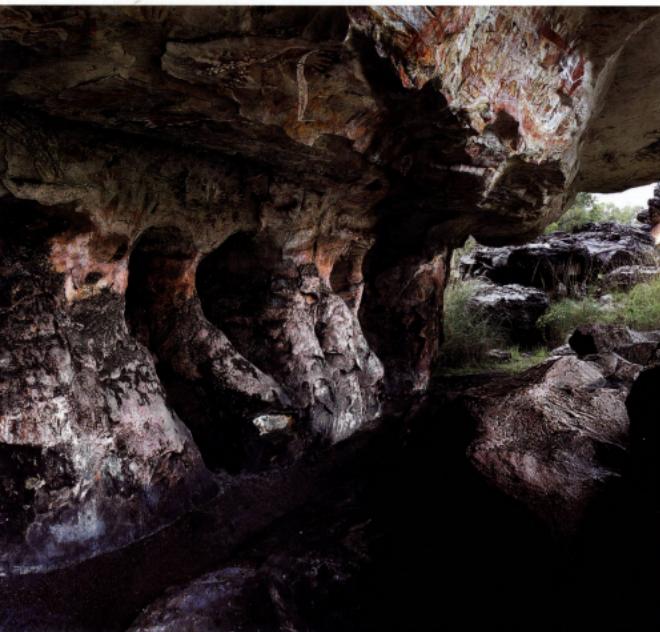
*Water rushes through a canyon after a storm, West Arnhem Land.*



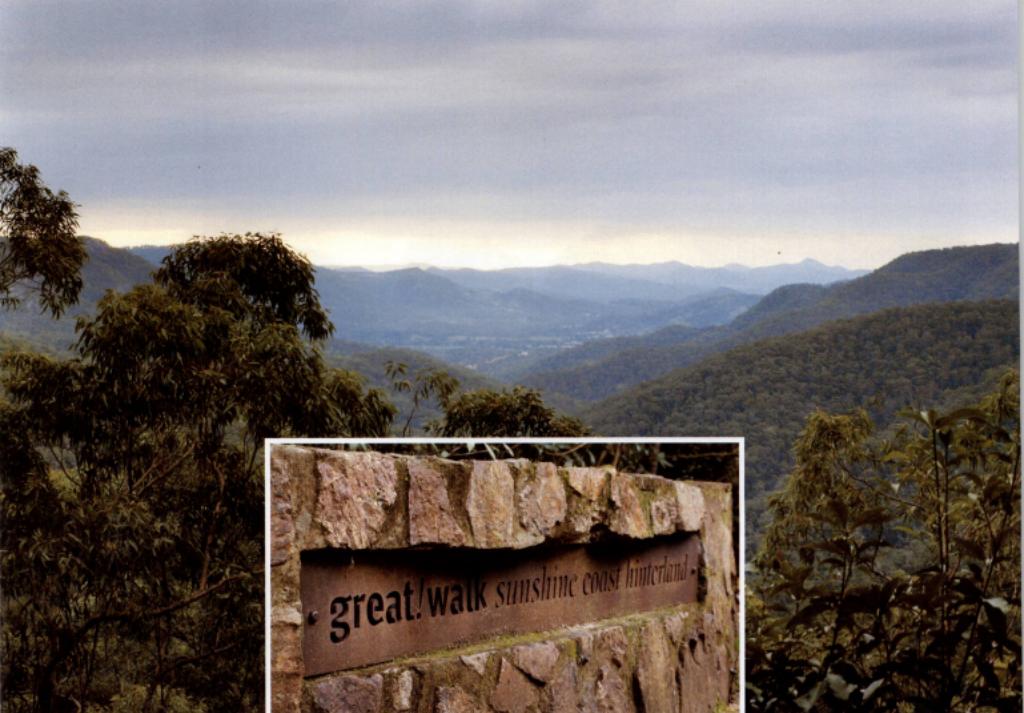


**Clockwise from left:** Colourful flotsam on the surface of a creek. Ancient rock formations on top of the West Arnhem Land Escarpment. Pillared cave, home to Indigenous people for thousands of years – near Mt Borradaile in northwest Arnhem Land.





For 20 years Richard Green and his wife Carolyn have used their private helicopter to find and photograph some of Australia's most remote and beautiful wilderness. They have just published a lavishly produced book of panoramic images, entitled *REMOTE & WILD - seeking the unknown Australia*. They hope that Richard's images will add to the growing public awareness of the beauty of our natural environment and encourage others to wish to protect it. Richard's work and the book can be seen at [richardgreen.net.au](http://richardgreen.net.au)



# Walking on Sunshine

Graham Reeks explores his own backyard – the Sunshine Coast's enchanting Hinterland – one of Queensland's ten new Great Walks

Landen with packs, climbing the steep steps beside Kondalilla Falls, a woman of advanced years with a smile the breadth of the Blackall Range waved her single trekking pole to us as she headed in the other direction.

"It's a good way to get about isn't it?" she said as she passed.

It is said that with age comes wisdom. I used to think this simply means we attribute great profundity to simple comments made by old people. But it's no surprise that as I age, the idea that experience breeds greater insight, appeals to me more.

Ten years ago, when I did my first long walk, I may have interpreted the woman's gesture as a simple pleasantry, a shared appreciation of the outdoor lifestyle, the flick of her stick equivalent to a tip of a hat.

Now I recognise a deeper meaning to the wise woman's words – she wasn't referring merely to walking as a good method of transport. She saw our weighty packs and understood. She meant: overnight walking is a transformative process of exploration, discovery and adventure. Didn't she?

I couldn't agree more. Ella (my wife), and I were on the first day of the Sunshine Coast Hinterland Great Walk. In the last year we had walked the Jatbula Trail in the Northern Territory, the Cape to Cape and a week-long section of the Bibbulmun Track in Western Australia.

All were exciting forays to new landscapes with unfamiliar conditions, but it was time to try something a little different. In these days of boundary-pushing adventures and gung-ho expeditions to kayak across deserts and cycle across the seas, we just wanted to find out if it is still possible to explore our own backyard.

Having recently moved to the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, at least we had a beautiful backyard to explore.

THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT has spent \$16.5 million over the past ten years developing the Great Walks of Queensland, and there are now ten walks to choose from. The Sunshine Coast Hinterland Great Walk weaves across the Blackall Range (an hour's drive north of Brisbane) and is close and accessible enough for us to complete as a series of day walks. But, as dedicated

through the gorge cut by the Obi Obi Creek to the dam, and because we were at the easternmost limit of the native bunya pine, it allowed us to play spot the bunya as we looked down on the canopy.

The walk is characterised by zigzag tracks weaving in and out of gullies, and the first switchback descent was soon reached, where we were beckoned down to the creek by the promising sound of running water and magical birdsong.

In the language of the traditional owners, Kondalilla means running or rushing water. How nice to be in the subtropics where creeks like these never stop flowing. We admired the timeless beauty of mutated buttresses, sinister strangler figs and thick, tangled creepers, and made promises to return to enticing swimming holes in the summer.

With a tinge of sadness, we progressed through occasional clearings draped in suffocating lantana. And yes, the slippery hoof marks and a fresh looking 'offering' confirmed we still weren't far from dairy country on the Blackall Range.

All too soon we were ascending steps alongside Kondalilla Falls to the popular picnic site, easily reached by road and full of kids on school holidays who thought chasing brush turkeys was a hoot.

The morning gave us a taster of places to return, while the afternoon was short and less sweet as we tramped three and a half kilometres along roads, and then back into the bush in a northern section of Kondalilla National Park, along a wide level track to Flaxton Walkers' Camp.

ARRIVING AT THE CAMP SITE we could see where a fair amount of the government's budget was spent. The camp areas we used on each of the three nights were all well established, with a wide choice of sites, plenty of platform tables, a good supply of tank water and a toilet. But still we camped alone...until night fell.



Enjoying the sun. Quentin Chester. **Far page from top**, the view down into Gheerulla Valley. The walk has plenty of signage. Old logging stump. Between strangler figs. All uncredited photos by the author

overnight walkers, we knew there was no better way to really familiarise yourself with a place than by walking through it, eating and sleeping in it...and not really washing in it.

The walk started at Lake Baroon, which legend says was the site of an Indigenous fighting ground. Today it is a peaceful 400-hectare pocket dam surrounded by thick green forest and fed by Obi Obi Creek, named after Ubie Ubie (an Indigenous warrior).

Trudging in the footsteps of warriors along a walkers' width track we were immediately under the canopy and heading into Kondalilla National Park, climbing gently out of the cool humid rainforest and up to a drier ridge of open eucalypt forest. From here an elevated lookout provided views back

AS WE SIPPED HOT TEA from our trusty plastic mugs after an early dinner, we heard a rustling noise. At campsites like these it's not unusual to hear a little after-dark disturbance in the undergrowth, but this wasn't the normal gentle rustling. It was unusually loud. And once noticed the sound seemed amplified.

Soon our headtorches were called into action as we tried to locate what could be making such a noise. We agreed it would have to be sizeable to produce such a racket, yet we couldn't seem to find anything.

I feared we had landed in the fire swamp from the 1980s film *The Princess Bride* and we were about to be attacked by ROUSES – Rodents Of Unusual Size...

On eventually finding the culprits I was a little embarrassed. Disappointingly small native mice were bashing around in the bushes, completely unbothered by our lights, or indeed anything to do with us. They certainly weren't Rodents Of Unusual Size – more like Rodents of Unusual Noisiness (RUNS).

Perhaps I'd grown unaccustomed to sleeping in a tent because my first night was an endless quest for comfort. It was made worse when I was woken by the sound of a violent tussle, more crashing around in the bush and the excruciating blood-curdling shrieks of an animal in peril. There was no way it was mice this time.

The noise died away, but several times started again, each time sounding slightly further away. I hoped the misery would end for the creature in pain, and as it continued I lay in the comfort of my sleeping bag imagining what dark scene was unfolding.

We had seen enough hair-filled scats on the track during the day to know there was some kind of bone-crunching carnivore at large, and by the time silence was permanently restored I had made up my mind: either it was a fox attempting to swallow some kind of bird of prey, or a bird of prey attempting to carry off a fox.

To add to the night's excitement I woke at one point to feel something wet and slimy on the floor of the tent resting by my arm. My torch revealed an engorged leech that had filled itself on my blood and then laid down next to me to rest.

THE SECOND DAY started with a twisting downhill, signalling a welcome return to narrow tracks and the awe-inspiring rainforest. Soon we reached the bottom of a steep-sided valley furnished with moss-cloaked boulders jutting up out of Baxter Creek. After a brief detour to see the gently tumbling falls, we crossed the creek, leaving Kondalilla National Park behind and launched ourselves back up the other side of the valley.

AT THE TOP OF THE RIDGE a brief spell of road-walking brought us to another little gem. Mapleton Falls is certainly one of the smallest national parks around – a tiny rectangle about 750 metres by 500 metres teetering on the edge of the plateau – and it harbours great views of dairy country and thickly forested hills.

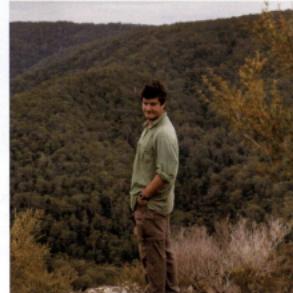
Our progress was unhurried rather than slow, although the walk is well suited to what Hugh de Kretser called 'Slow Walking' in the Autumn 2009 issue of *Wild*. The 58-kilometre trek requires no more than four to six hours walking per day for four days, even when you're dawdling like we were.

We passed through a small section of rainforest in the national park and then entered into a swampy regrowth forest abundant with palms, and with duckboards to keep us out of the wet. In amongst the spindly young trees and draping fronds we saw the remains of mighty old trees, looming out of the woods like bushrangers, hand-felled by a previous generation. The timber cutters' steps in the old stumps had the curious effect of making them look like overgrown, wooden Ned Kelly masks.

As with the first day's end, the final part of the afternoon's walk was relatively lacklustre. A flat stroll through Mapleton Forest Reserve on a shared-use track (although we were the only ones using it) brought us to Ubajee Walkers' Camp.

The set-up was more or less the same as the first night, but this camp had the feeling of being further into the bush – which it was. Though what made this spot a real delight was the nearby viewpoint, giving us a sneak preview of the next day's trek through the verdant Gheerulla Valley.

After a night mercifully free of eagles, foxes and Rodents of Unusual Noisiness we descended 250 metres into the valley, exchanging the lofty view from the plateau for the delight of another narrow zigzag track



## **'In these days of boundary-pushing adventures and gung-ho expeditions to kayak across deserts and cycle across the seas, we just wanted to find out if it is still possible to explore our own backyard.'**

and, as we came closer to Gheerulla Creek, a return to the rainforest.

At the base of a steep hill we arrived at Walkers Junction – a place to make a decision. The remainder of the walk was a loop called the Gheerulla Circuit on the western edge of Mapleton Forest Reserve, which ran next to the creek along the valley floor before climbing and returning along the ridge.

Because the final night's campsite was towards the northern end of the ridge, we

planned to take the longest side of the loop, starting low and walking 6.5 kilometres northwest along the valley floor, before climbing 400 metres to reach Gheerulla Bluff and then turning southeast along the ridge.

We began on a wide track, elevated above the creek and surrounded by towering trees covered in gargantuan clusters of epiphytes. Soon the track dwindled to a narrow path and the steep creek bank lowered until we were walking alongside the water on the



pebbly ground of temporary riverbed, crossing and recrossing the calm waters of the creek as the day progressed. Towards the northern end of the flat valley floor, the vegetation became drier and we admired beautiful caramel-coloured scribbly gums.

ON ANY GIVEN DAY OF WALKING, we have a custom of choosing a lunch spot at the base of the day's steepest incline. It's a frustrating habit as a full belly makes the climb seem so much harder. So, breaking with tradition in a quest for an easier uphill, we had a small snack and held out until we were halfway up the zigzag track to Gheerulla Bluff.

Near the track we found the grizzly remains of what was identified by its tag as a



Admiring Baxter Falls. Far left (from top), crossing the bridge over Baxter Creek. A sculptural strangler fig. The author with Gheerulla Valley behind.

Bundaberg racing pigeon. It had probably been intercepted by a peregrine falcon.

Climbing the ridge we noted another change in the forest, which became dominated by woolly-barked eucalypts and impressive grass trees. We ate, enjoying the views towards Kenilworth, before reaching the bluff and continuing along the ridge to Thilba Thalba viewpoint. From here, peering back down to the valley floor we'd walked along that morning it truly felt like we were miles from anywhere.

Another one and a half kilometres and our day's ascent was rewarded with the walk's final and best campsite. Situated on the ridge, and kitted out with platforms and a toilet like the others, there was a viewing area immediately next to the campsite providing an excellent dinner time view of Gheerulla Valley. It was another spot to which we vowed to return.

All that remained on the last day was to complete the loop back to Walkers Junction, and then find our way to our pick-up point back near Mapleton, returning along some of the track we'd walked two days before.

The remaining 7.5 kilometres of the ridge included a brief stop off at Gheerulla Valley viewpoint to see the valley again from a different angle, and then a gradual descent to

the wet sclerophyll forest alongside the creek again. Here we took a brief detour to see the base of a trickling Gheerulla Falls, just shy of the junction.

From Walkers Junction we traced our route back up the hill, past Ubajee Walkers' Camp and then took a spur out to a road to be picked up.

Climbing into the car for the short trip home I recognised the familiar overheating feeling, my cheeks flushing red, as I returned to an artificial environment. I looked forward to eating a good range of fresh vegetables that evening and wrinkled my nose, not at the musty odour of unwashed bodies, but at the synthetic smells of non-walkers' cosmetics.

As we sped away from the rainforest and the waterfalls, the grass trees and dirt tracks, I thought again about the wise woman we'd seen on our first day and her comment that overnight walking was 'a good way to get about'.

It really is that simple. The walk we had just completed may not have been tough, but it was right in our backyard, and there really is no better way of getting to know your backyard than by exploring it on foot.

It's a decade since I first tried overnight walking, and I probably enjoy it now more than ever. It has taken me places both distant and close to home, and given me the chance to interact with environments – to be part of them rather than just an observer.

The Sunshine Coast Hinterland Great Walk serves as an excellent introduction to overnight walking. It's not too long, not too hard, offers good camping and superb weather. The signage throughout the walk is excellent – so much so that the route-marked topo map we bought from the Department of Environment and Resource Management was almost superfluous. For us, it was a superb introduction to Queensland's Great Walks.

Now we just have to decide which of the other nine Great Walks we should try next. **W**

**Graham Reeks** is a freelance writer who learned to walk at a young age, and hasn't stopped since. He grew up in England but feels most at home exploring wild Australian bushscapes.

## WALK AT A GLANCE

<b>Grade</b>	Moderate, with steep sections
<b>Length</b>	Four days
<b>Distance</b>	58 kilometres (including link path to pick-up point)
<b>Type</b>	End-to-end with loop section through subtropical rainforest and tall open eucalypt forest
<b>Region</b>	Sunshine Coast Hinterland, Southeast Queensland
<b>Nearest towns</b>	Montville, Flaxton, Mapleton
<b>Start/finish</b>	Lake Baroon (Montville)/Mapleton
<b>Maps</b>	Route marked topographical map from Department of Environment and Resource Management
<b>Best time</b>	March to October for cooler drier conditions

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# Fit As

**Alex Shirley outlines the three key fitness principles for preparing for long treks**

**TO TRULY ENJOY** the whole experience offered by a multiday trek, you really need to be fit. Unfortunately, juggling a busy life leaves many walkers under-prepared. Lacking time, most people either go for some *ad hoc* walks or attend a mix of classes at the gym, but doing unplanned workouts that aren't tailored towards the trekking environment won't give you the results you're after.

A truly successful trekking preparation program involves the combination of three key principles:

1. Training tailored specifically for the environment you expect to encounter
2. Interval training
3. Sticking to a progressive schedule that carefully builds up your fitness to the necessary level without risk of injury

## **Principle one: make your training specific**

Changes that happen to your body during exercise are specific to the exercise program you're using. That means swimming in a pool or punching a boxing-bag won't necessarily help you walk up a hill.

The most effective way to train for a walk is to simulate the environment you're intending to trek through as closely as possible. If your trek will involve four to six hours of trekking at a moderate pace over varied, hilly terrain, then your training program should include lots of walking, some hill work, and longer weekend sessions on walking paths to break in your boots. Get used to carrying a pack too – start off with a light daypack of around three to four kilograms, then build it up to the size of the pack that you will use on your trip.

If you're really limited by time, or don't have access to an ideal outdoor walking environment, there are other good options, such as the following (in order of effectiveness):

1. Walk on a treadmill (changing the inclination to simulate hills)
2. Use a step machine
3. Use an elliptical or cross trainer
4. Run
5. Cycle

## **Principle two: harness the power of the interval training**

Leisurely walking on the flat for 30 minutes is great for your health, but it isn't going to lead to big improvements in your endurance levels. By the same token, pushing yourself impatiently at a constant high intensity can lead to poor results and possibly exhaustion and injury.

You need to select a level of exercise that



benefits your body and doesn't cause damage. Exercise is a form of physical stress, and if you are already under a lot of negative stress from your lifestyle, are lacking in energy or not feeling well, then putting more stress on your system will just break you down further. Research has shown that interval training is an effective way to train and involves much less wear and tear on the body.

Interval training involves alternating short bursts of high-intensity exercise with easy recoveries. The theory is that by breaking an exercise session into multiple short intense efforts, more total work can be achieved than in one longer intense effort.

For instance, a study that compared 20 minutes of high-intensity interval training (a 30-second sprint followed by a four-minute rest, repeated) with 90–120 minutes of training in the Target Heart Rate Zone (60–85 per cent of maximum heart rate) showed that subjects gained the same improvement in oxygen utilisation from both programs. What is amazing is that the 20-minute program only required about two minutes and 30 seconds of actual work.

There's no single accepted formula for the ratio of intense exercise to recovery, but the high-intensity phase should be long and strenuous enough that you're out of breath. Typically, this means 30 seconds to three

minutes of exercise at high intensity, and 30 seconds to five minutes of rest. Recovery periods should not last long enough for your heart rate to return to its resting rate.

Three sample interval training sessions are set out below. Remember to warm up and cool down before and after interval training with ten to 15 minutes of fast walking or jogging.

### **SAMPLE ONE**

Four sets of 800 metres of hard exercise with easy walk or jog between each hard burst. Add one 800-metre interval per week, up to a maximum of eight.

### **SAMPLE TWO**

Four sets of 400–600 metres of hard exercise up a hill with an easy walk back down between. Add one extra hill per week up to a maximum of eight.

### **SAMPLE THREE**

Two minutes of hard exercise followed by two minutes of easy exercise. Repeat five to ten times.

Avoid interval work on consecutive days so that you don't overly stress the body.

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### SAMPLE PROGRAM FOR MODERATE GRADE TREK

Below is a sample program designed for a moderate grade trek that involves walking up to 15 kilometres per day with an elevation change of fewer than 600 metres.

Week	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sunday
1	-	40 Int	35	-	40	-	1 hr 30-2 hr
2	-	40 Int	40	-	40	-	1 hr 30-2 hr
3	-	45 Int	45	-	45	-	2 hr-2 hr 30
4	-	40 Int	40	-	40	-	1 hr 30
5	-	50 Int	50	45 (Int)	45	-	2 hr-2 hr 30
6	-	50 Int	50	45 (Int)	45	-	2 hr 30-3 hr
7	-	1 hr Int	1 hr	1 hr (Int)	50	-	3 hr-3 hr 30
8	-	50 Int	50	45 (Int)	45	-	2 hr 30
9	-	1 hr Int	1 hr	1 hr (Int)	50	-	3 hr 30-4 hr
10	-	1 hr Int	1 hr	1 hr (Int)	55	-	4 hr-4 hr 30
11	-	1 hr 10 Int	1 hr	1 hr (Int)	1 hr	-	4 hr 30-5 hr
12	-	1 hr Int	50	45 (Int)	50	-	3 hr 30-4 hr
13	-	1 hr 10 Int	1 hr 30	1 hr (Int)	1 hr	3 hr	5 hr-5 hr 30
14	-	1 hr 10 Int	1 hr 30	1 hr (Int)	1 hr	4 hr	6 hr
15	-	50 Int	1 hr	1 hr (Int)	1 hr	-	3 hr
16	-	45	45	-	45	-	

#### KEY

Solo numbers indicate walking time.

Numbers with Int indicate total session time for interval training session. The interval portion of the session should last for 20–40 minutes and the whole session should last for the time indicated in table.

Numbers with (Int) indicates walking time or optional interval training session time.

#### Principle three: follow a schedule

Your endurance training should gradually increase throughout your program to ensure that you continue to improve your fitness with minimal risk of injury. This process is called periodisation.

One popular method of periodisation is to train in four-week blocks. Over the first three

weeks, increase the total time of your exercise. In the fourth week, significantly decrease the total time. Training with these 'unloading' segments allows your body to recover from the first three weeks of exercise – this lets your body absorb the training, reducing the chances of fatigue and giving excellent results.

On a larger scale, you could divide your program into four phases: General Conditioning (weeks one to six), Specific Conditioning (weeks seven to 12), Peak (weeks 13–14) and Taper (week 15–16).

The General Conditioning Phase is an important time to lay down aerobic foundations. The emphasis is on endurance training and training volume progressively increases with 'unloading' segments.

The Specific Conditioning Phase progresses your fitness level from aerobic work to faster forms of training. Training should now include



*Training with a pack on is a great way to replicate conditions on a trek. All photos Shirley collection*

more hills for increasing your strength and stamina. It's important not to overdo it at this point. If you're tired, you should perform plenty of passive (ie rest) and active (eg easy swims, stretching) recovery.

The Peak Phase is the time to reach your maximum distances.

Finally, the Taper Phase is designed to help you mentally and physically prepare for the trek. Too much work in this period can adversely affect your performance during the trek.

Somewhere in your schedule, include a long walking session each week and gradually increase this session until it matches the actual time that you will be walking each day on your trek.

If you can't stick to the schedule then take advantage of any chance you can to move. Leave at home and walk to the shops, climb up stairs rather than using the lift, carry those extra bags of shopping and chase your children around the park. Opportunities to use your body surround you and if you struggle to make time for a structured workout then this is how you should seek to train.

A final piece of advice is to keep your workouts interesting – exercise with a friend or train in a new area. After all, the most effective training program is the one that you will actually do. Remember to stretch tight muscles every day, and consult an exercise expert for a functional strength program to improve both your posture and performance.

*Alex Shirley is a CHEK Institute-qualified exercise and lifestyle coach, registered with Fitness Australia. He combines his exercise background with his passion for the outdoors and runs a regular Trek Fitness Program in Sydney to prepare people for challenging treks: [primalfit.com.au](http://primalfit.com.au)*

# A Winter Traverse of the Du Cane

## Cam Walker outlines a rare six-day alpine fix in Tasmania's Cradle Mountain - Lake St Clair National Park

Given the low elevation of Australia's mountains, you have to conspire with good winter conditions to get an elemental fix of snow, ice, rock and sky without going overseas. The place to find this is on the narrow ridge that connects Castle Crag and the Du Cane Range in Tasmania's Cradle Mountain - Lake St Clair National Park.



### WHERE

The Du Cane Range is a major feature in Tasmania's Central Highlands. The 'Du Cane Traverse' is a challenging four-day walk that links the Overland Track's southern end with the track that leads into the Labyrinth. In mid-winter the landscape transforms, making a mid-year traverse something else altogether.

### WHEN TO GO

Later in winter is best for good snow cover. But your best bet is a flexible schedule that allows you to go at short notice once there has been a good dump of snow with a high pressure system following.

Allow six days for this adventure (although you can do it in less). While the approaches are easy, the off-track section is hard. Plus, having more days gives you room for inclement weather and to explore this sublime landscape.

### SAFETY/WARNINGS

This trip requires good route-finding and snow assessment abilities (slide avalanches are not uncommon in Tasmania). Several sections of this trip will be steep and possibly icy, and the snow can hide deep holes in scree slopes; crampons and an ice axe are highly recommended. Choose snowshoes over skis since they are less likely to cause problems as you work your way through thick forest.



You will need good winter camping gear including a snow shovel, a tent that can cope with high winds, and plenty of fuel for melting snow (at least three nights' worth).

Be aware, once you're on Castle Crag - Mt Massif Ridge, you're fully committed. If you do decide to bail, you need to retrace your tracks; it would be madness to attempt dropping off the range to connect with the Overland Track. Only start the trip if you have at least a two-day window of good weather to get to the Labyrinth.

### ACCESS

Lake St Clair is about two and a half hours' drive northwest of Hobart. From Hobart take the Lyell Highway to New Norfolk, then follow the highway to Derwent Bridge and Lake St Clair. The walk begins and ends at Narcissus Hut, which you can reach by hiring the walkers' ferry. You can do the walk in either direction; I have described it from the Du Cane Gap end.

# Range

## The walks



### THE WALK

At Lake St Clair, hire the walkers' ferry to get you to Narcissus Hut. You will be thankful for the Overland Track's easy boardwalks in the last light of day. If you arrive late, headlamps will get you through the last few kilometres to the brand new Bert Nichols Hut. Working your way around the Acropolis' dark bulk, you will feel like a child wandering around what seems like an enormous but empty and dark mansion in the hills.

### Day two

Passing trees that may be covered in feathery power snow, the Acropolis-Geryon Ridge will loom above you. Continue northwards along the Overland into bewitching rainforest, emerging into sunlight as you reach Du Cane Gap.

Just near the gap, veer left from the big plain. There may be thigh-deep powder here; you will have to forge on, pushing uphill past snow-covered myrtle branches. Your boots will fill with water as you plunge through the snow cover into a stream.

Then you arrive in forest – the sort of country that's lovely to look at, but hell to push through. Don't underestimate how hard this section is – there are no straight lines here, so be careful not to exhaust yourself following false leads ending in

snow-laden branches. Eventually you will emerge into the open, directly below the big fresh cliffs of Falling Mountain.

From here, stay high and close to the cliff-base – the bush bashing isn't finished. The boulderfields that circle much of the mountain are even more difficult to navigate. You will hop and slip your way around under the cliffs, each step needing to be tested before committing. You will be putting our snow shoes on and taking them off endlessly. It will be hard to find the right rhythm for travel with your heavy packs and stop-and-start walking, but eventually you will emerge from boulder-field purgatory into a promised land: the base of a broad gully leading up on to the main ridge. You will now be in a fully alpine environment, happily kicking your way up the slope under grand cliffs and passing thickets of bare deciduous beech, Australia's only winter deciduous tree.

On the ridge set up your tent and admire the icy slopes below, dropping steeply towards distant plains and valleys. If the conditions aren't friendly then cross to the ridge's north side, get in behind one of the enormous boulders and dig in so your veranda faces the impressive Cathedral Mountain. Save the side trip to the top of Castle Crag for the morning.

This is the place to visit for cold weather,

*Dawn on the Du Cane Range, with Big Gun Pass and Mt Massif at right. Grant Dixon. Far left, on the Overland Track, just near Du Cane Gap. All uncredited photos by the author*

rock, ice, silence and snowfalls. Sit on some rocks, melt shards of water ice, brew drinks and cook. You will barely be able to speak as the evening deepens, casting remarkable light on the peaks and creating an arc of sunlight over the summit of Mt Massif. The impressive gap of Big Gun Pass will loom directly in front of you.

### Day three

The next day, climb back on to Castle Crag to be treated by perfect views deep into the Central Plateau.

The next stage of the trip is perhaps the easiest. The ridge broadens out, so follow your nose until you come to a high point immediately before Mt Massif. Descending from this hill can be tricky, because the northwestern side is filled with giant boulders; route-finding can make the going slow and tiresome. There are some deep, dark slots in this section and heavy snow can make it potentially dangerous. The best bet is probably to get someone to scout the route without packs first.

After only a few hundred metres you will find yourself in a gorgeous saddle,



A camp near Castle Crag.

**Right:** rainforest near Du Cane Gap.

The ridge above looks tempting but, with a combination of ice and heavy packs, it's dangerous. Instead of tackling this, veer directly downhill from the saddle to the right (north) until you can work your way under the obvious cliff-line. Stick close to the cliff-base as you head towards Mt Massif into a huge gully system. Rockfall can happen here, so don't dawdle. Head uphill without straying too far out on to the steep slopes of the gully to eventually emerge in a saddle at the gully's head. This area is an amazing cushion plant garden, so stay on the rocks where you can. It's also often wind-blasted, and the snow can be heaped in wonderful and contorted piles.

From the saddle, a short walk over the summit brings you to a protected basin, which makes for a perfect campsite. Mt Massif feels remote: it's guarded by steep approaches, and the wild country stretches out before you; deep valleys end in the mountains that line up against the western coast.

This has been a short day, which means you can really explore the mountain and rest up. The next section requires attention – it is all boulders down to the pass and best to do when you're not tired. If you've not been here before it is wise to scout out towards the pass to identify the best route for when you're lugging all your gear.

#### Day four

You have two options available here: the direct (but exposed) way, or an indirect (less exposed) alternative.

The logical way is to climb over the false summit above the basin where you camped, then clamber down the ridge beyond to a prominent 'bench' about half way down. Catch your breath, then tackle the tumbled boulders below direct to the pass. The catch is this route is potentially a serious undertaking. The ridge is narrow, with

drops of several hundred feet in places and one very airy section. And it is entirely composed of boulderfields, which can be nasty and dangerous in patchy snow or icy conditions.

The less exciting option is to head west out of the campsite basin and then on to the broad slopes below, heading out and leftwards towards the tree line (towards Mt Hyperion). Traverse down and across to pop out in Big Gun Pass. You'll still have to negotiate boulderfields, but with no exposure or vertical stuff.

The pass is truly impressive country. Its grand terrain and glacial sharpness makes it seem like New Zealand's Southern Alps. Beware of cornices. In icy conditions the slope above can be intimidating. Scope the face as you descend into Big Gun Pass; there are a number of options, and the best way may depend on the snow conditions on the day. Once, I dropped into the saddle from the Du Cane side in early winter conditions. There had been a big dump of snow that was slowly melting. It was exhilarating; a perfect day, cool and sunny, and we were racing down the slope in a glissade shuffle when a substantially sized rock shifted under my weight, setting off a mini avalanche that carried me forward then sent me into a cartwheel. After scraping and bouncing down the slope, I managed to stop just before an icy section. The only damage done was to my dignity, but it underscored that this is close to 'real' mountain country, with a number of objective dangers not so common in Australia.

Once you've climbed out of the pass, you will reach the narrow plateau that marks the Du Cane Range's northeastern end. Throw yourself in the snow and snap some photos that will bring good memories for years to come – it's the perfect spot for the 'we were here' group photo; you're deep in the mountains, with the hardest stuff behind you.

From the tarn, head towards the rise in front of you and be prepared to drop



your jaw as you come over the crest. The rocky peaks of Hyperion, Eros and Walled Mountain emerge, and below you lies a gorgeous alpine basin.

This is another short day, which means that if time, weather and energy allows, then a side trip up Geryon can make for another serious mountain fix. This deserves a story in its own right. The series of gullies you follow in summer on the walkers' route can be steep and scary, with a long drop below in winter conditions. A less gnarly alternative is a climb up on to Mt Eros and, weather-permitting, the treat of fantastic views into the Labyrinth and Walled Mountain.

There are a number of spots to camp up here. Obviously be aware of where the small lakes are (in terms of any waste) and also that this is all fantastically exposed, meaning if weather comes in you will need to head into the oncoming storm to reach the cover of the Labyrinth. If in doubt it may be wise to walk pretty much to the end of the range, above the track to the Pool of Memories. You can find some sites here with astounding views up to Geryon and right down Pine Valley to Lake St Clair.

#### Day five

Time to leave the high country. If you don't know the area, it can be hard to find the top of the track down from the Du Cane Plateau. It's marked by a series of small cairns that take you into a steep gully (expect to get wet here), and then into the forest beyond. Follow the ridge directly towards Pool of Memories, dropping into what can be a confusing tangle of deciduous beech as you near the lake.

It's a different world down in the Labyrinth. You're back amongst the trees – incredible old growth forests of pencil pine and deciduous beech, with snow gums up on the rockier and more exposed rises around Lake Elysia.

The first section in the Labyrinth can be a slog as you leave the valley – the lake

## The walks



Looking towards the Acropolis and Mt Geryon from Castle Crag. **Right**, pandani (*Richea pandanifolia*) near Du Cane Gap.

backs up and floods the start of the track in winter. If you're lucky you may spot a platypus (I have no idea how they survive winter up here). Make sure you're on the track as you leave the pool, otherwise you're in for a steep bush bash up the hill. As you top out on to the Labyrinth proper you will continue to be treated to remarkable views; the 'other worldliness' is sharpened by the presence of the pines and the rocky peaks. In good conditions, your snowshoes should carry you happily through here. In poor conditions it can be a hard and slow and very wet slog back out to the Parthenon Saddle and the well-marked feeder track back down to Pine Valley.

Where the track skirts lakes Ophion and Cyane, it can be slow and muddy work. In good snow conditions you're better off staying up high as you cross the Labyrinth, dodging around the lakes, rather than following the summer track.

Summer on the Overland is an endless wave of people moving south. But in winter, with very few folks out on the track and several nights of alpine camping behind you, the company of others in a crowded hut as your wet and muddy gear



steams away around the stove can be a real joy. Of course, really smart folks will have coaxed some friends to walk in to meet you for the weekend bearing gifts of fresh food, alcohol and clean socks.

#### Day six

Shoulder the packs for one last easy saunter back to Narcissus Hut. You will need to have pre-booked the ferry if you are not walking all the way out.

The Overland Track passes through some grand country and there is always the sense of achievement as you get close to the end of the track. Add to this the magical experience of wild alpine country at its winter best, matched with all the hard work of getting safely over those ridges – the route-finding, the cold starts and all the rest of it – and you truly have a trip to remember. If you catch the boat out and the weather is still clear, you might catch last glimpses of the distant ridge, clean and wild, as you head downriver back to the coast and day-to-day life.

#### WALK AT A GLANCE

**Grade:** Difficult

**Length:** Six days

**Type:** Alpine, and old growth forest

**Region:** Tasmanian Highlands

**Nearest town:** Derwent Bridge

**Start/finish:** Narcissus Hut

**Best time:** Late winter for snow cover

**Special points:** The closest 'real alpine' experience you'll get without leaving Australia. Parks ask people to limit their overnight stays in the Labyrinth to one night. Be aware of where you leave waste (ie not where it may seep into shallow alpine lakes or in Mt Massif's summit basin).



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# A Gorgeous Gorge

The walks

**Graeme Spedding outlines this spectacular and varied gorge walk along the Murchison River in the Kalbarri National Park in Western Australia**

The village of Kalbarri was a small fishing community for many years before it was discovered by the tourist industry in the late-1960s and early-1970s. Although the fish have declined the very pretty town continues to thrive on tourism and is famous in Western Australia for its wildflowers and very scenic river gorges. In the late 1980s and early 1990s the gorges also were the scene of some very active rockclimbing development. Commercial abseiling is also conducted in the park. School holidays are best avoided if possible and bushwalking in summer is almost out of the question due to the extreme heat.



## WHEN TO GO

Winter is the best time to visit, as this is when the climate is the most mild and you are more likely to find water.

## SAFETY/WARNINGS

The Murchison River is not potable for the length of the park. Carry your own water or be prepared to rely on rock pools (rainfall permitting), which are sometimes reliable. Sometimes there are water drips in the gullies, although they are becoming less reliable as years go by. In high water the river is best not crossed and this can add considerably to your travel time each day, as you will have to, at times, climb out of the gorge in order to proceed.

If you decide to do the five- to six-day walk from Ross Graham Lookout to the Loop, you will need to be competent and confident at traversing narrow ledges high above the (often dry) riverbed. This usually involves pack passing, people also need to be good at route finding and prepared to spend some time finding the best route.

## ACCESS

The town of Kalbarri is situated 600 kilometres north of Perth. It is best reached via the Brand Highway or Indian Ocean Drive /North West Coastal Highway to Northampton, and then by

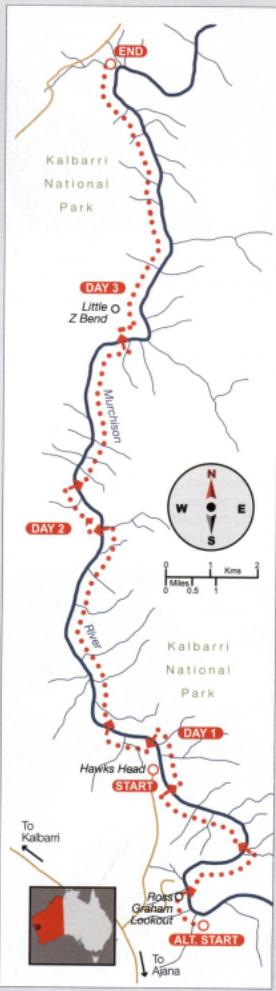
*When there is water in the Murchison River there is also superb swimming.*

Simon Carter

following the coastal route by turning left at Northampton on to the Port Gregory Road. If you intend to start walking on the day that you drive then do not use the coastal road from Northampton, but stay on the North West Coastal Highway and turn left about 40 kilometres north of Northampton; this gives the quickest access to the gorges.

If you forget anything important you can obtain extra supplies at Geraldton. People pressed for time can now fly to Kalbarri on Skywest Airlines: ring the Kalbarri Tourist Bureau for details on (08) 9937 1104.

The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) likes walkers to register at the office in town, but you can call them before your walk and register your details: phone (08) 9937 1140. The office is helpful and will advise on the state of the river and the likelihood of finding water. The Anchorage Caravan Park caters for campers but bookings are advised (08) 9937 1181. The local taxi service will also drop off walkers and help with car shuttles, call (08) 9937 1888 to arrange.





## THE WALK: HAWKS HEAD TO Z BEND (THREE NIGHTS/ FOUR DAYS)

### Day one: destination campsite at GR 505 242 (five kilometres)

After the six-hour drive from Perth, those keen to get walking can do the car shuffle: leaving one car at Hawks Head and the other at Z Bend. This takes about an hour, so include this time in your plan. From the carpark walk out to the lookout and look upstream – you will identify a very large whitegum that marks the top of the descent. Head for this and a gentle scramble will have you alongside the river in no time at all. If the river is high (but crossable) you can head upstream on the true lefthand (as you look downstream) bank (LHB) to a rocky crossing about 400 metres upstream (approx GR 506 233). From here it is a pleasant stroll downstream on the right hand bank (RHB) to a large (once grassy) area at GR 505 242. Water can sometimes

*Kalbarri is beautiful early in the morning. Carter. Below, skirting alongside the river often requires some tricky traversing.*  
Graeme Spedding

be obtained from a drip in the gully to the east of the campsite, but it should be treated.

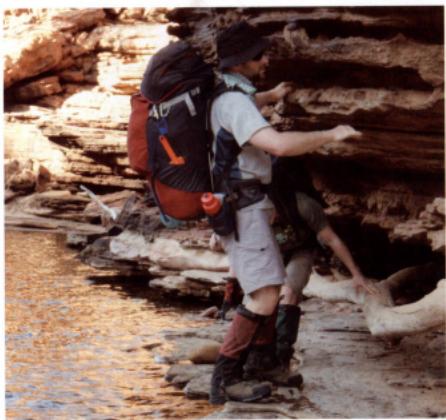
If the river is low you can turn downstream from Hawks Head and walk along the LHB, taking care when hopping up and down the ledges, and then cross over to the campsite when you are opposite. If you have plenty of water and don't mind camping on rocks then there is no need to cross. Please do not camp within sight of any of the lookouts and don't light fires.

### Day two: destination a large rock overhang at GR 488 290 (seven kilometres)

If you have crossed to RHB to camp, cross back over at the rocky crossing immediately to the west of your campsite. Carry on down the LHB before crossing again at GR 494 244. The tick-tacking back and forth across the river is usually to avoid sharp river bends that become unpassable if you are on the outside of the bend. Water is usually found in rock pools to the left of this second crossing, although it can be a little brackish if it has not rained recently. There is abundant birdlife along this stretch and the colours of the cliffs, especially in the morning light, are quite stunning.

Continue on the RHB to avoid a large cliff on the lefthand side. If the river is not crossable you will have to climb out of the gorge on the lefthand side and walk along the top of the gorge for about a kilometre, before descending back to the riverbank. Slow going but great views.

Walking along the RHB is easy going and a leisurely lunch can be had, with a swim if there is enough water, before walking on to the next crossing. Water can be found in rock pools at GR 487 259. Cross back over to the LHB at GR 491 287. Maintaining a line about two to three metres above the water will make for easy progress, and minimise the scrambling up and down. Proceed along the bank to the bend in the westerly bend in the river; the camp is about 300 metres downstream from here. If you have not crossed the river you will now have to swim or pack float across. Water can be found about 300 to 400 metres downstream from the campsite in pools above the river.



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### Day three: destination Little Z Bend at GR 498 326 (six kilometres)

Head north on the LHB and you can pick up water in the rock pools previously described, or cross the river and collect water on the RHB. If you stay on the RHB, you will have to cross back on a rock step at GR 488 292 to avoid a climb. But the climb is not too bad and has an easy descent from the top and there are good views along the way. The rest of the day offers some easy walking interspersed with some sharp scrambles that will put you quite high above the river (rather than in it). It can be a little scratchy at times and one has to keep an eye out for large loose boulders. There is also plenty of birdlife and time for quiet contemplation. Cross back over to the LHB at Little Z Bend and choose your campsite next to the river. The rock pools right next to the river provide good rain water in spring, but beyond mid October can become unreliable. Little Z Bend has good water pools for swimming, a sheltered campsite in a gully on the RHB and some exploring in gullies on the LHB for the more intrepid.

### Day four: destination Z Bend carpark (six kilometres)

Essentially there is no need to cross the river any more, the walking is up and down but fairly easy on the LHB. Some scrambling is required but is fairly easy overall. Take your time and get some photos of the different colours and layering in the gorge walls. Bird life abounds and there are plenty of the pleasant sites for morning tea and lunch.

As you approach the main Z of Z Bend at GR 494 374 or thereabouts, keep down next to the river and be prepared to get your feet wet as you traverse along nice little ledges with your boots slightly underwater. Not far from here you will end up on a small beach that leads down to the river and then rock ledges on your left. You can either take your boots off and wade the along the river's edge or, if you are up for a good traverse, you can shuffle along the rock ledges until you get to the safety of dry rock. Be warned, once this rock gets wet it is especially slippery and you will fall over if you are not careful. This low ledge leads along the edge of the river and can be followed for some way, but it is a little tricky. If you are not up for falling into the water, do the following: after you dry your feet, go along about 60 to 70 metres and climb up (pack passing required).

**Below**, there is plenty of animal life along the Murchison. Carter. **Below right**, enjoying an early morning cup of tea before the day's walking. Spedding



and the carry on along the top ledge. Just like the ledges below, this ledge is like glass if wet, so take care.

From here on in, all you have to do is negotiate the main bend. Proceed north for about 400 metres to the exit gully, which is usually marked by tour groups sunning themselves and/or groups of abseilers. If you get to the end of the 'Z Bend' and start turning east, you have missed the turn and must go back. The exit was easy to find for many years as it started with a ladder climb! But now is up to your left and involves some rock steps, a few ladders and tourists who don't seem to appreciate the vagaries of climbing up with a pack.

Collect your car in the car park and then reverse the car shuffle to collect the other vehicle, then drive into Kalbarri for a well earned beer and/or pizza from the Pizza Parlour (highly recommended).

### TRIP EXTENSIONS

Proceeding beyond Z Bend to the Loop will take another two days (six days overall) and involves some very exciting and exposed walking on, along and above the river. This is best tackled by experienced and well-equipped parties who are used to steep scrambling, pack passes and walking along narrow ledges with long drops into the water. You can also add an extra day at the beginning by starting at Ross Graham Lookout.

### WALK AT A GLANCE

**Grade:** Easy to moderate, hard if you finish at the Loop

**Length:** Four to six days

**Distance:** 22 kilometres

**Region:** Mid west of Western Australia

**Start:** Hawks Head Lookout or Ross Graham Lookout

**Finish:** Z Bend or the Loop.

**Best Time:** June to October

**Maps:** Kalbarri 1:100 000 Sheet 1742 Edition 1

**Special Points:** Generally easy walking to Z Bend with some very pleasant campsites



# klean kanteen

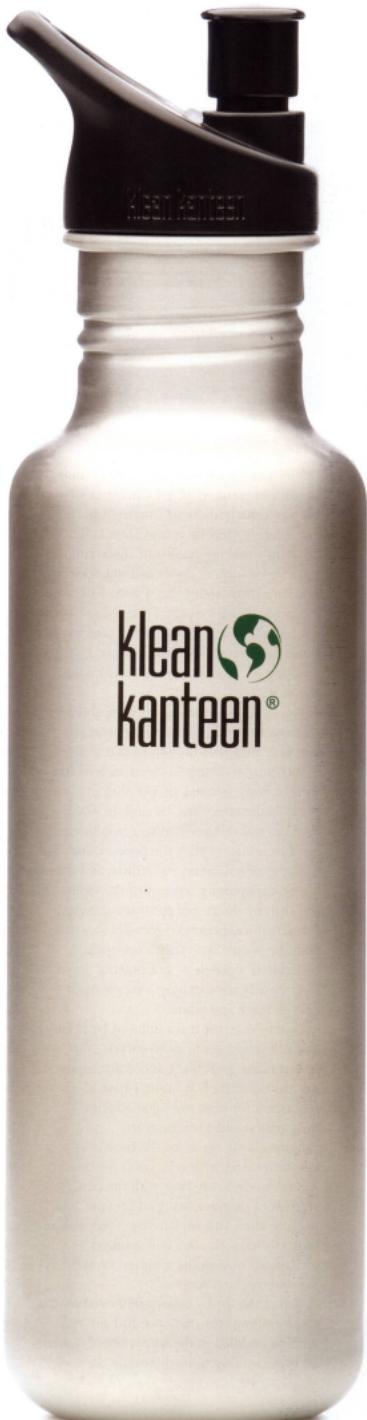


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# MOANERS AND SCREAMERS

*Dr Steve Van Dyck on noises in the night*

I'm told the interminable three-minute shower scene in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* was a masterpiece of simulated horror that, on its review by actress Janet Leigh, left her with a lifelong phobia of showering and a mania for locking doors and windows. I wouldn't know about that. I must have seen the movie 267 times and I really don't know what all the fuss is about. In my case, my hands have never failed me...always shooting up over my eyes just before the action starts.

Yet my thumbs have never been able to shut out Bernard Herrmann's 'music', so famously joined-at-the-hip to that scene. Shrill, tinny, stabbing Stradivarian bird-like shrieks. From where I sit, pressing my eyeballs, the effect may be slightly worse than the real thing. When you combine a vivid imagination with the pressure-induced flashings of colour on my retinas, and those biting, ear-splitting screams of the violins, I feel that, by the end of the three minutes, I've actually experienced something worse than the people with their eyes open; particularly since those not bearing down on their eyelids are watching a movie made only in black and white.

Given the terror that's induced by noise alone, it might come as no surprise that out in that other great black-and-white arena, the Australian bush at night, I have a reputation for both my value-added imagination and a tendency to simultaneously reach for the brown corduroys. And with very good reason. Australian days may ring with the benign warbles of magpies, but gird up your ears, because after dark we have out there a suite of nocturnal screamers and grunters guaranteed to turn the toughest bronzed Aussie bowels to water.

Top of the list by about 4000 decibels is a bone-chilling roar that once had my wife and me huddled in the far corner of our tent all night waiting to be disembowelled. We'd

figured the creature outside must have been an escaped lion desperate for real flesh after a lifetime of zoo-issue soya-loaf. Many years later, and having since identified the embarrassing source of those appalling roars, I was consulted by some men – tough by bar-room standards – who'd also endured the same bellowing routine. They'd locked themselves in their ute for the night, waiting nervously with cocked rifles for claws and slavering teeth to rip the doors off their hinges. Miraculously living through their ordeal, they'd made all the logical Aussie conclusions and attributed the atrocious aural adventure to a roving yowie.

On playing them a recording of the offender, none other than a rampant red deer bellowing across a reverberating valley (but not yet identifying the beast to them), they'd unanimously agreed that yes, indeed, it was a yowie call. But judging by the disbelief on their ahen faces when told what it was, I wondered what they were going to regret more...the annoying glitch in such a compelling pub yarn, or the amount of time they'd spent disinfecting the interior of their car for the sake of a big, bawling Bambi.

Male red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) roar and attempt copulation relentlessly between March and June. This period of unparalleled preoccupation with ball sports is appropriately called the rut, a term that most Australian females of a not-so-distantly related species could justifiably exchange for a similar period of preoccupation their mates disguise under the phrase...the footy season.

Not so long ago, wild red deer, introduced to Australia from Great Britain in the late nineteenth century, were restricted mainly to a big population in subtropical southeast Queensland. However, illegal releases and deer-farm escapees have seeded growing feral populations elsewhere in Queensland as well as throughout New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. Author Tim Low has predicted that as a threat to the

environment, a destroyer of crops and pasture, and a social nuisance, deer could well be on their way to becoming Australia's next major pest. Red deer are already officially listed as one of the 100 worst invasive species on the planet.

Not as earth-shaking as the roar of the red deer, but far more disturbing on account of its hideously human timbre, is that shout attributed down the years to the barking owl (*Ninox connivens*). Apparently (for the jury is now out) this owl has a number of calls, among which are the 'wok-wok; wok-wok' (as expected) and a 'screaming woman' call that is supposed to sound like a woman being strangled – again very Hitchcockian to those of us raised on (and damaged by) the great director. I have heard this but once in my life, one night when I was about 13, on

**'Miraculously living through their ordeal, they'd made all the logical Aussie conclusions and attributed the atrocious aural adventure to a roving yowie.'**

a five-day fly-infested walk along Coxs River near the Blue Mountains. It was a hideously ear-piercing scream followed by a throttling gurgle, and would have been excruciatingly disturbing for everyone around the fire, had not one of the mob been a twitcher who'd been praying every day for the past ten years for a first-hand encounter with this bird and its horrendous call.

But (another glitch here) we didn't see the creature responsible for the awful screams. Australian ornithologist and photographer Graeme Chapman now questions the fact that this call really belongs to the barking owl at all, proposing that the goose-pimpling



shrieks might be made by mating red foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*). Turn out the lights, up the volume and listen for yourself – visit [graemechapman.com.au](http://graemechapman.com.au), click on 'Barking Owl' and hit the first audio file – and see if your hair doesn't look good in afro.

If being forewarned is forearmed then 'sensitive' walkers, before committing themselves to the blackness of the bush at night, should listen also to the chilling calls made by some other shockers: yellow-bellied gliders, brushtail possums, bush-stone curlews, koalas, flying foxes, alley cats and the appalling scream of a rabbit caught in a trap.

Thirty-three years on and my wife still wakes up in a cold sweat to the roaring that threatened to tear us apart all those years ago. But it's not coming from outside the tent, more from below the sheets and the apnoeic old stag lying alongside her. It must be comforting for her to know subconsciously that, with me nearest the doorway, any disembowelling that has to take place is now a vastly bigger task, giving her ample time to gather her belongings and get away.

**Left,** not only do red deer make a noise that scares the pants off grown men, they are a major emerging pest. Peter Jesser

Dr Steve Van Dyck is the Senior Curator of Vertebrates at the Queensland Museum and *Wild's* newest regular columnist.

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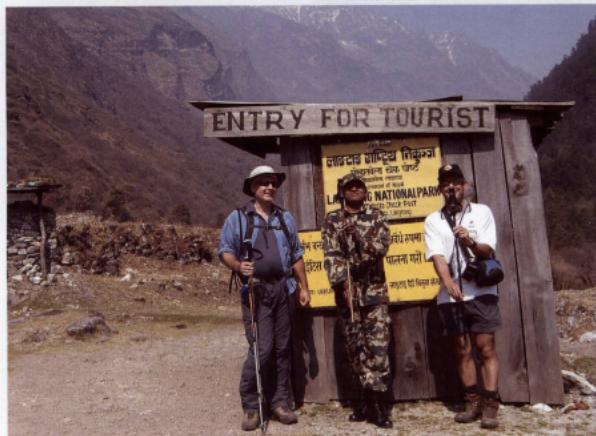
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# Exploring the Poles

**Zac Zaharias surveys trekking poles**



When mountaineering in New Zealand in my youth I thought nothing about bounding in and out of the mountains with a huge pack on my back. However, with age comes wisdom, not to mention the dicky knee, hence my conversion to trekking poles for self-preservation.

Trekking poles are not widely used in Australia due to our benign terrain, but they are common in mountainous regions overseas. On walks like the Kokoda Track they are essential and have saved many a hapless trekker's pride by stopping them going for a tumble. Increasingly, the value of poles as an exercise medium and all round body workout is being discovered through pursuits such as Nordic Walking (see box). Some research suggests use of trekking poles increases efficiency by up to 40 per cent.

Trekking poles provide power and support. During steep descents they provide balance as well as protection to the knees, particularly while carrying a large pack. On flatter terrain, poles can increase walking speed with the upper body providing push, similar to the action of a cross-country skier (see the box 'Using Trekking Poles').

Anti-shock is a feature in some poles. A spring inside the pole reduces the amount of jarring on hands and wrists, particularly over rocky terrain. When descending, anti-shock allows you to gently absorb the full load of your body and pack on to

*The author (at right), presenting 'arms' at a checkpost at the Langtang National Park, Nepal. Zaharias Collection*

the springs before stepping down. Like other trekking pole features, anti-shock is a matter of personal preference. The disadvantages include additional weight and cost.

The weight of the poles varies between 175 to 350 grams (for a single pole). Weight is not a significant factor unless you are going on extended walks where lighter poles reduce fatigue; in my experience once you use light poles you will never go back to a heavier ones.

Most collapsible poles have a mark indicating where to stop when extending poles – this should never be exceeded, as it will damage the pole. Poles that use twist or external (flick-lock) adjustments allow a broader range of usable pole length. Binary and pin-style adjustments have incremental or 'stepped' adjustments that lock securely, but have the disadvantage of limiting the usable range and don't always lock in icy conditions. External locking systems work well but add about 50 grams extra weight to the pole, and you also need to carry a screwdriver or allen key to tighten them up very so often.

Handgrips are usually made of cork, rubber or foam. Cork is the lightest, moulds

to the shape of your hand and doesn't slip when sweating. It is the best material, however it is less durable. Rubber handgrips are durable but on long walks I find that your hand sweats and blisters develop. Foam is comfortable but less durable. Some poles have a foam collar just below the handgrip to hold the pole when traversing.

Most trekking poles have simple strap adjustments, either a two-piece strap with buckle or velcro adjustment, or a single loop that feeds back into the handgrip with a pressure-locking device. Padded wrist straps provide greater comfort, particularly if you use the straps correctly. The single loop wrist straps are superior. Personally I don't like external buckle adjustments as it digs into the back of your hand.

Common shaft materials used are aluminium, chrome alloy and carbon fibre. Aluminium is the most common material, being lightweight and relatively strong. Better grades of aluminium are more expensive and durable. Chrome alloy is a slightly heavier, cheaper and stiffer material and if bent or kinked is more likely to snap. Carbon fibre is lighter and very strong with little flex, providing energy back to the user. However, they are more vulnerable to damage from a side blow.

Insulation can be an important consideration, particularly if you are using your poles in the snow. Poor insulation can lead to frostbitten fingers as heat is conducted away, particularly through metal shafts. Carbon poles and cork handgrips provide the best insulation properties.

Most poles use either steel or tungsten carbide tips. Tungsten tips are more hardwearing and provide bite over hard surfaces such as rock. Increasingly, poles are coming with the option for a rubber tip or cover. These are less jarring and more environmentally friendly on soft ground, not leaving holes behind. Most poles come with a standard sand basket and many also include snow baskets as extra. Baskets are essential, as many a hapless trekker has discovered on the Kokoda Track where poles can disappear into the mud when weighted.

Trekking poles don't need much maintenance. Clean and dry the inside of the pole after use as aluminium oxidises. Most parts are replaceable, allowing you to prolong the life of your pole.



#### BLACK DIAMOND ALPINE CARBON CORK RRP \$210 (PAIR)

Black Diamond (BD) has a reputation for being innovative and these poles don't disappoint. They are the lightest and most compact of the BD range, thanks to the 100 per cent carbon fibre shaft. The poles are beautifully balanced when held. Each pole weighs 246 grams (mid-range in weight compared to others). Like most poles these are collapsible three-section poles utilising a sturdy flick-lock system. The grip is natural cork and has a very soft, comfortable feel about it. The wrist strap has also been carefully crafted to have padding for the thumb and forefinger web. The strap is lined with Nubuck leather and the grip extends down the shaft with a foam extension. The pole is fitted with a standard sand basket and includes a snow basket. The tips are made of tungsten carbide.



#### DENALI TRAMPER RRP \$60 (PAIR)

At 340 grams per pole these were the heaviest on survey (and also the cheapest). The poles are made from sturdy, heavy-grade aluminium that appears like it would take some effort to bend. The three-section telescopic pole utilises the classic twist-locking system and includes an anti-shock that can be locked off when not required. The composite cork handle is quite solid and the wrist-strap is broad and padded at the back, ensuring a more comfortable fit. The straps are also easily adjustable. The pole comes with both standard and snow baskets with the pole tip made of tungsten. I found this pole to be top heavy and a bit out of balance. Overall, this pole is ideal for the budget traveller although a tad weighty for my liking.



#### EXEL PATHAN PL CARBON RRP \$299 (PAIR)

Exel is a brand better known in cross-country skiing and Nordic walking circles. The Exel Pathan at 200 grams is the lightest in the survey but quite strong with little flex. The upper two shaft sections are made of carbon fibre with the lower section being aluminium. The pole is adjustable and utilises a flick-lock system. The grip is made of foam and this also extends to the upper part of the shaft. The wrist-strap is padded and a comfortable fit. It also has a simple but effective locking lug to stop the wrist-strap slipping. Like most poles it comes with a sand and snow basket. The pole tips are made of carbide.

MODEL	WEIGHT, GRAMS	LENGTH CENTIMETRES	SECTIONS	SHAFT MATERIAL	LOCK	ANTI-SHOCK	GRIP	RRP (FOR A PAIR), \$
Black Diamond Alpine Carbon Cork	246	62.5-130	3	C	Flick	N	Cork	210
Denali Tramper	340	67.5-135	3	Al	Twist	Y	Cork	60
Exel Pathan PL Carbon	200	70-140	3	C, Al	Flick	N	Foam	299
Exped Explorer SA	215	105-130	4	Al	Twist, Pin	Y	Foam	230
Jacko Pro Lite	300	72-145	3	Al	Twist	Y	Foam	135
Komperdell Highlander Cork	270	70-140	3	Al	Twist	Y	Cork	160
Leki Corklite Speedlock	274	65-135	3	Al	Flick	N	Cork	200

**EXPED EXPLORER SA RRP \$230 (PAIR)**

At 215 grams weight, these anodised aluminium poles come as a pair and are at the lighter end of the market. The compact four-section design is a nice feature, allowing them to easily collapse into a more compact size for packing. A combination of twist-lock and a double-push button system enables the poles to lock more securely, however it is fiddly to lock, which could be problematic in the elements. The anti-shock absorber is made of an inverted spring that expands under pressure. It is secured inside the pole shaft and protected from moisture, ensuring a longer and more durable life. The foam grip is extended along the shaft to enable a secure hold for traverses. The wrist-strap is wide, comfortable and simple to adjust. Baskets include snow and standard sizes and a carbide tip provides grip. Five different models are available for a range of uses.

**JACKO PRO LITE RRP \$135 (PAIR)**

If you can't afford top dollar, but want a sturdy trek pole, the Jacko Pro Lite may be for you. It is made from a sturdy 7075 aluminium alloy without too much flex. The collapsible three-section pole uses the classic twist-locking system. The pole also includes anti-shock, although it can't be locked-off like most other brands. The pole weighs in at 300 grams but, surprisingly, it feels well balanced and comfortable. The grip is made of foam and extends to the upper shaft area. The wrist-strap is adjustable and reasonably comfortable without the frills and padding of the more elaborate models. The tip is carbide and comes only with a standard sand basket. Overall a good value for money pole in the lower to mid-range

**KOMPERDELL HIGHLANDER CORK AS RRP \$160 (PAIR)**

The comfortable cork grip is a feature of this pole, while the wrist-strap is simple but easily adjustable. The 7075-T6 aluminium shaft is light and strong and the three-section telescopic pole is locked off with a standard twist-lock system. The anti-shock can also be locked off for saving energy uphill. At 270 grams the pole is mid-range in weight. The pole comes with a standard-sized basket and the tip is made of tungsten carbide, providing excellent grip and durability.

**LEKI CORKLITE SPEEDLOCK (ULTRALIGHT) RRP \$200 (PAIR)**

Leki has a huge range of trekking poles to choose from with 32 listed in its catalogue. A feature of the Ultralite series of poles (including the Corklite featured here) is the slimmer shaft diameter, ensuring a 20 per cent lighter pole and better swing. The Corklite comes in either external (flick-lock) or classic expander locking system. The external lock system is rated to 140 kilograms locking power, however it does come with a weight penalty, adding 42 grams to the overall weight and bringing the pole to 274 grams – at the higher end of the weight scale. The pole comes in three sections and has a composite cork and plastic grip with a broad and comfortable wrist strap that is simple to adjust. A standard basket and carbide tip complete the pole.

## Using Trekking Poles

Unlike their European or North American counterparts, most Australians have limited experience with trekking poles and haven't realised the full benefit of poles and their proper use.

Unfortunately, most Australians use trekking poles with their arms extended in front of their hips, like they are using a Zimmer frame, making walking slow and hard work.

To use them properly, first poles need to be adjusted. The principle is that you shouldn't be raising your hands much higher than your waist. In a standing position, with the elbow bent at a 90° angle, the arm should be pushed out horizontally, parallel to the ground. The shaft height is adjusted so that the hand can then naturally grab the handgrip. It's vital to fit the wrist strap correctly. With the pole in an upright position, the wrist strap is held out horizontally. The hand then comes through the strap loop from below and then the hand gently grips the handgrip. Most importantly, the web of the hand between the thumb and forefinger should sit snugly on the strap where it comes out of the handgrip. The strap should not be too long, otherwise your hand will flop out when you hand swings past your hip.

When walking, pressure is placed downward on the strap section that comes out of the handgrip. Initially this feels awkward, as it is natural to hold the handgrip like alpine stocks. However, with practice it gets more comfortable. When walking, the hands should remain close to the body and swinging naturally through with a bent elbow. Over time as you become more proficient you can build considerable rhythm and cadence with poles.

The length of the pole should be decreased for uphill work and increased for downhill walking. On a traverse, the pole lengths should be adjusted with the downhill pole being longer than the uphill pole. On steep traverses the pole can be held across the body and used like an ice axe, with the tip being pushed sideways into the steep slope. When descending, the poles are placed in front of and below your feet. Weight is then transferred on to the poles in one of two ways, either through pressure on the straps where the webbing of your hand touches the strap between thumb and forefinger, or by placing the palms of your hand on the knobby bit at the top of the pole.



Janet Gahan stretching out her poles on a ten-day trek in the Langtang region, Nepal.

Zac Zaharias

## Nordic Walking

Nordic Walking is a recent pursuit developed in Finland that is becoming popular worldwide. Originally poles were the tools of cross-country skiers. Nordic Walking has developed as a pursuit in its own right for people wanting an all-round body workout during the off-season months. Many traditional skiing tracks are utilised for summer walking, with programs offered by dedicated clubs. In Australia, the urban, beachside and mountain terrain is ideal. Nordic Walking provides an all-round work out for arms and legs with lower physical impact. Some research claims that energy consumption increases as much as 40 per cent compared to walking without poles.

Nordic Walking poles differ from conventional trekking poles as they are either non-collapsible single segment poles or two segment adjustable poles. The poles are lighter and not designed to support heavy loads. Straps are padded and have left and right grip straps that can be adjusted on to the hand like a glove. This enables the pole to be released when the arm is fully extended rearward, providing more push (similar to cross-country skiing), then easily recovered as the arm swings forward without having to grip the pole itself. Some poles include pedometers on the top of the grip to monitor distance and time.

Further information is available from [nordicacademy.com.au](http://nordicacademy.com.au)



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# Gaiters

## A Wild survey of protection for your legs

While gaiters are not everyone's favourite thing to wear, they are particularly useful for wet and muddy conditions, off-track walking or for protecting against snake bite. Some people still prefer to just wear a heavy pair of pants and cop a few scratches. Certainly as the weather heats up gaiters become more and more irritating as they can be hot and itchy, although this is precisely the time you might want to wear them to protect against snakes.

Gaiters generally come in two lengths, the shorter ankle gaiters you might use to protect against prickles and the longer type surveyed here,

which come to just below the knee. Gaiters usually come in three different types of fabric, each with its own attributes: Cordura (nylon), canvas or Gore-Tex. Gaiters produced entirely from Cordura (all the gaiters surveyed have Cordura around the base of the gaiter) are usually the cheapest and quite light. The main problem with Cordura is that while it is waterproof it won't breath, making them hot and sweaty. Canvas gaiters are more expensive, more breathable than Cordura and very hardwearing. Gore-Tex gaiters are generally the most expensive and the most breathable, although in hot weather you may not

notice much of a difference. Most walkers prefer a stiffer gaiter that doesn't have to be fastened at the top to stay up, this means that air can circulate easily in hot weather.

Generally, in terms of longevity, wear and bang for buck, most people use nylon gaiters for muddy off-track walking, canvas gaiters for heavy off-track walking, with Gore-Tex gaiters being reserved for snow use. But there is no fixed rule, plenty of walkers are happy to spend more on Gore-Tex gaiters for thrashing through the bush, while others prefer to spend less and sweat a bit more.



### CACTUS INSTIGAITER NZ \$99\*

The Instigaiters are canvas gaiters and easily the toughest gaiters on test. They do up with the standard velcro front fastening (all gaiters on test fastened this way) and attach at the front with a chunky wire hook. At the top they form a nice seal with elastic that can be tightened with one hand, while there is a strong piece of nylon tape that goes under the foot and is easily adjusted. At lot of people like gaiters that stand up without being fastened at the top so that air can circulate, these stand easily. The perfect gaiter for those who destroy them at regular intervals. Three sizes: small, medium and large. 365 grams (small). [cactusclimbing.co.nz](http://cactusclimbing.co.nz)

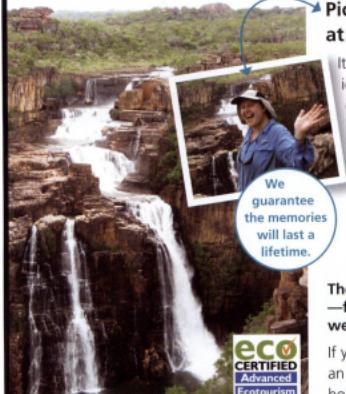
\*Price includes free shipping world-wide.



### MACPAC TORLESSE GAITER \$54.95

The Torlesse are a lightweight, simple pair of nylon gaiters. Because they are so light they don't offer much protection in scrub. While they don't necessarily need to be fastened at the top to stand up while new, you get the feeling they will sag down your leg as they get older, meaning that you will have to keep them tight at the top. You have to source your own cord to secure the gaiter under your boot (in our experience cord never lasts that long). Good for the price-conscious who might be going somewhere muddy but won't be going off-track. Come in three sizes: standard, long and women's. 250 grams (large). [macpac.com.au](http://macpac.com.au)

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#### OUTDOOR RESEARCH MEN'S CROCODILES \$99.95

The Crocodiles are a Gore-Tex gaiter with some nice attention to detail, they (and the women's version) are the only gaiters on test that are double stitched along the front opening, which cop's a lot of wear when you are battling through scrub. The bottom of the opening also has a nice little velcro tab going back the other way, to stop it from being dragged open by snags. The adjustable (and replaceable) strap that goes under the foot looks very durable. The upper gaiter is made from tough three-layer 70D Taslan Gore-Tex. The clip at the top is easy to adjust, but doesn't need to be done up tightly to keep them up. A classic snow gaiter design that looks like it will hold up well in the Australian bush. Five sizes: small, medium, large, x-large, xx-large. 289 grams (large). [outdooresearch.com](http://outdooresearch.com)

#### OUTDOOR RESEARCH WOMEN'S CROCODILES \$99.95

Essentially identical to the men's Crocs, the women's version has just been resized for a smaller fit and stitched with a flower. See comments above. Three sizes: small, medium and large. 252 grams (medium).



#### SEA TO SUMMIT QUAGMIRE (CANVAS) \$69.95

After the Instigators these are the most rugged gaiters surveyed. The Quagmires have most of the features you want, they are double stitched around the bottom of the Cordura base (although not along the front opening like the Crocs). They have scuff patches, although they seem excessive given that Cordura is generally pretty tough. The loop under the foot is replaceable, but looks like it would last a long time. The tops tighten with a velcro strap, but the gaiter is stiff enough to stand up on its own. A hard gaiter to go past for general use at its price point. Comes in four sizes: small, medium, large and x-large. 390 grams (large). [seatosummit.com.au](http://seatosummit.com.au).

#### SEA TO SUMMIT QUAGMIRE (GORE-TEX) \$79.95

These have all the same features as the canvas Quagmire, but with a Gore-Tex upper. The Gore-Tex used is 500 denier (heavier than the Crocs), so it should wear well. It also has a panel of stretch Gore-Tex as well as the regular stuff, which might make them a bit more puncture proof. Apparently Sea to Summit is replacing the Gore-Tex with eVent (at the same price point), which will make them more breathable again.

A good price point for a Gore-Tex gaiter for those who want more breathability. Comes in four sizes: small, medium, large and x-large. 370 grams (large).



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## Wild Diary

November

Tulah Challenge M  
6 November, TAS  
[www.adventurerace.com.au](http://www.adventurerace.com.au)

Anaconda Adventure Race Augusta M  
Race August 13  
[www.rapidascent.com.au](http://www.rapidascent.com.au)

Blackheart Sprint Adventure Race M  
7 November, QLD  
[www.blackheartevents.com.au](http://www.blackheartevents.com.au)

Great North Walk 100mile/100km BR  
13 November, NSW  
[www.aura.asn.au](http://www.aura.asn.au)

Three-hour Minigaine R  
13 November, SA  
[www.adventurerace.com.au](http://www.adventurerace.com.au)

Brisbane Valley 100 P  
13-14 November, QLD  
[www.canoe.org.au](http://www.canoe.org.au)

Eildon Challenge M  
14 November, VIC  
[www.adventurerace.com.au](http://www.adventurerace.com.au)

2/4 hr Paddlegaine P  
14 November, QLD  
[www.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.rogaine.asn.au)

6 hr Cyclogaine/Rogaine R  
14 November, VIC  
[www.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.rogaine.asn.au)

Blackheart Sprint Adventure Race M  
14 November, NSW  
[www.blackheartevents.com.au](http://www.blackheartevents.com.au)

Moe 6 hr and 50km BR  
20 November, VIC  
[www.aura.asn.au](http://www.aura.asn.au)

Urban Max Sydney R  
20 November, NSW  
[www.maxadventure.com.au](http://www.maxadventure.com.au)

SA Spring Regatta 2 P  
20 November, SA  
[www.canoe.org.au](http://www.canoe.org.au)

World Rogaining Championships R  
20-21 November, NZ  
[www.rogaine.org.nz](http://www.rogaine.org.nz)

Blackwood Marathon Relay M  
20 November, WA  
[www.adventurerace.com.au](http://www.adventurerace.com.au)

Solehart Donnybrook Marathon Relay M  
20 November, WA  
[www.adventurerace.com.au](http://www.adventurerace.com.au)

Paddy Pallin Adventure Race Series M  
27 November, ACT  
[www.rocospark.com.au](http://www.rocospark.com.au)

NSW State

Championship P  
27 November, NSW  
[www.canoe.org.au](http://www.canoe.org.au)

Victorian Slalom Championships P  
27-28 November, Vic  
[www.canoe.org.au](http://www.canoe.org.au)

6 hr Socialgaine R  
28 November, NSW  
[www.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.rogaine.asn.au)

December  
Mud Run BR  
4 December, NSW  
[www.maxadventure.com.au](http://www.maxadventure.com.au)

Razorback Run BR  
4 December, Vic  
[www.aura.asn.au](http://www.aura.asn.au)

Anaconda Adventure Race M  
5 December, Vic  
[www.rapidascent.com.au](http://www.rapidascent.com.au)

Bruny Island 64km BR  
5 December, Tas  
[www.aura.asn.au](http://www.aura.asn.au)

Coast to Kosciuszko BR

10 December, NSW  
[www.aura.asn.au](http://www.aura.asn.au)

Kurra to Duranbah BR  
10 December, Old  
[www.aura.asn.au](http://www.aura.asn.au)

Six Inch Trail BR  
19 December, WA  
[www.aura.asn.au](http://www.aura.asn.au)

January  
Narrabeen All Nighter BR  
8 January, NSW  
[www.aura.asn.au](http://www.aura.asn.au)

Bogong to Hotham BR  
9 January, Vic  
[www.aura.asn.au](http://www.aura.asn.au)

Fenn Cup Ocean Race – The Twist P  
15 January, NSW  
[www.oceanpaddler.com](http://www.oceanpaddler.com)

Fenn Cup Ocean Race – The Twist P  
16 January, NSW  
[www.oceanpaddler.com](http://www.oceanpaddler.com)

Two Bays BR  
16 January, Vic  
[www.aura.asn.au](http://www.aura.asn.au)

Launceston 6 & 12 hr BR  
16 January, Tas  
[www.aura.asn.au](http://www.aura.asn.au)

**Activities:** BR bush running, M multisports, P paddling, O orienteering, R rogaining. Rogaining events are organised by the State rogaining associations. Canoeing events are organised by the State canoeing associations unless otherwise stated



### Outdoor Research Helium Jacket

The Helium is the lightest, most compressible storm shell that Outdoor Research put out, in fact the weight of the large size is a paltry 193 grams. Made with a waterproof/breathable membrane toughened up with ripstop fabric to give it more wear and less tearability, the jacket is fully seam-taped, has a single-pull hood adjustment, elastic cuffs and a single drawcord in the hem. In a nod to climbers, the jacket packs into its own pocket and can be clipped directly to your harness. The Helium retails at RRP \$199.95.

[outdoorresearch.com](http://outdoorresearch.com)



### Petzl gives the green light

Old batteries make dirty, poisonous waste and with the release of the Accu CORE rechargeable, Petzl is doing its bit to reduce the impact. The Accu CORE pack replaces the three alkaline batteries that power the TIKKA2 and ZIPKA3 range of headlamps. Performance in the cold is improved and the unit charges off any standard USB charging device. The upfront outlay of \$79.95 may seem steep but with a life of 900 regular batteries, the Accu CORE soon pays for itself and that's 900 less batteries thrown away. [petzl.com](http://petzl.com)



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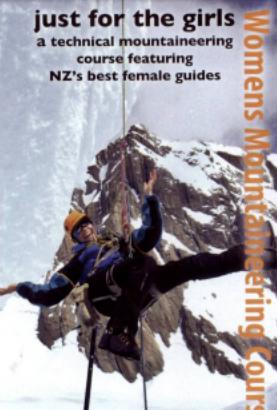


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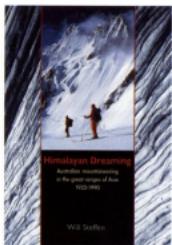
### Rubbing gone

Considering the importance of the job they perform, relatively little thought goes into briefs. Helly Hansen has moved to correct this oversight and bring us all chafe-free walking with the Stride Seamless Boxer short. Made from dry fibre and with air circulation features, the jock pulls away excess heat and sweat in order to guarantee performance. As discomfort discriminates against no gender, the Seamless Boxer comes in both men's and women's models. RRP \$39.50. [hellyhansen.com](http://hellyhansen.com)

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### HIMALAYAN DREAMING

BY WILL STEFFEN (ANU E PRESS, 2010, \$39.95, EPRESS.ANU.EDU.AU)

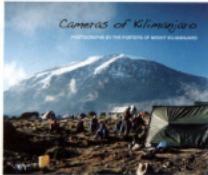
*Himalayan Dreaming: Australian mountaineering in the great ranges of Asia, 1922-1990* is a well-researched and considered account of the history of Australian's climbing in the Himalaya up until the end of 1990.

Many of those tempted to pick up a copy, or download it for free, will probably have first heard a lot of this stuff in animated discussions at their local gear shop, around the campfire, in books or in *Wild*. You will

probably even know some of the people in the book. The big difference with this 'telling of the tale' is the perspective that the intervening 20 years has brought.

In particular, the true significance of the first Australian ascent of Everest on a difficult new route and without oxygen, is better appreciated in hindsight. Just as compelling are the fascinating accounts of the invention of oxygen gear and the down jacket – both by a pioneering Australian in the 1920s and lots of vignettes from smaller trips to the lesser known peaks.

Adam Leavesley



### CAMERAS OF KILIMANJARO

BY HELEN OSLER AND THE PORTERS OF KILIMANJARO (BLURB.COM, 2010, RRP\$50, PORTERPHOTOPROJECT.COM)

When you're climbing Tanzania's greatest draw card, it's easy to overlook the everyday struggle of Mt Kilimanjaro's local porters. This book captures these men making a living – hauling gear beyond the recommended weight, mostly without proper rucksacks – through their own eyes, literally.

Helen Osler sent ten disposable cameras from Perth to Africa. There, the porters caught on film life on Kilimanjaro as a porter. Theirs is a story of basic human rights.

Fighting a losing battle with corruption, exploitation and health; their voices unheard. Except for in these photos. All profits raised from the sale of this book will be donated to the Kilimanjaro Porters Assistance Project to help improve Mt Kilimanjaro porters' working conditions and promote responsible tourism.

Chelsea Eaw



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# Michele Kohout

It was my father who introduced me to the outdoors. My earliest memories are of being in the bush with dad and him teaching me about the natural world. He showed me how to see the beauty and patterns of the bush and also to respect its harshness. Dad was a photographer and we spent a lot of time looking at graceful old eucalypts, how rocks might be arranged naturally on a beach and the intricate patterns of sea urchins. We did a lot of camping and walking together in a variety of landscapes and those formative years have shaped the rest of my life.

Dad taught me not only how to appreciate nature, but also how to camp respectfully in it. How to organise, plan and, most importantly, not leave a trace. I also learned to walk quietly in the bush so that you can hear everything around you and not disturb animals. Dad has a fantastic sense of direction and I hope I have inherited that.

Like dad, I too became interested in photography and started taking photos of the bush. Painting and drawing also became hobbies and I found that by drawing the detail of a plant or animal I could understand much more about it.

I did my first solo walks in my early 20s. While I like sharing wilderness experiences with others I find solo walking far more rewarding. The solitude is very important to me. There is something special about being alone in the bush that makes me feel closer, more at one with the landscape. Most of my solo trips have been four or five days long. It is hard work carrying everything yourself and I cut back on some of the luxuries, like food, so I have room for essentials like my camera. When I head out by myself, it isn't about the struggle or achieving a goal, it is just about being outdoors and experiencing the surroundings.

I have had a couple of close calls while out by myself, but nothing horrific. I was once 'misplaced' in some very steep subalpine country around Mt Pilot, near Kosciuszko, and it took me a long time to get out. I wasn't lost as such, I always knew where I was... I just took a short cut that took a lot longer than planned. On Hinchinbrook Island I broke my ankle on the first day and had to struggle back to the start. The night after it happened I felt very alone and vulnerable. I had a close encounter with a cassowary that was quite scary. But my number one worry is wild dogs. I haven't encountered any myself, but I have heard numerous stories of packs of dogs in our parks and it is something to be wary of. Snakes also make me nervous, especially in remote areas.

One area that is close to my heart is Wilsons Promontory. I have spent so much time down there and I always want to head back. I feel very proud to have co-authored and helped to illustrate *Wilsons Promontory: a field guide*, a book that others can use to identify the flora and fauna in the area. It's such a special place and we are lucky to have it so close to Melbourne. Another region I love is Mount Kosciuszko and the alpine areas of Australia. The alpine flora is fascinating and so varied, and the vistas above the treeline are hard to beat.

I am currently working as a botanist examining a variety of ecological issues, including the impact of salinity, the threat that weeds pose to natural areas and the ecology of rare plants. Recently I examined the impact of the alpine fires on threatened flora (they are recovering well), and although I still do a lot of office work my job combines my passion for the outdoors with my working life quite well. It is good to feel that I am making a difference to the environment, giving back, so to speak, to something that I have gained so much from.

Interview and photo Craig Ingram





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